THE

GAMESTER

A

TRAGEDY

OF FIVE ACTS

WRITTEN BY

Mr. MOORE

Marked with the Variations in the

MANAGER's BOOK

AT THE

Theatre Royal in Covent-Garden

LONDON.

Printed for W. LOWNDES, 38 Bedford Street.

1811.

[*Price One Shilling.*]

*** The Reader is desired to observe, that the passages omitted in the Representation at the Theatres are here preserved, and marked with inverted Commas; as at Lines 10 and 11, Page 9.

T. C. Hansard, Printer, Peterborough-Court, Fleet-Street, London.

CRITICISMS

ON

THE GAMESTER.

THIS Tragedy, written in prose, is the most capital piece Mr. Moore produced. The language is nervous, yet pathetic; the plot is artful, yet clearly conducted; the characters are highly marked, but not unnatural; and the catastrophe is truly tragic, though not unjust. Still with all these merits it only met with middling success, the general cry against it being that the distress was too deep to be borne; yet I am rather apt to imagine its want of perfect approbation arose in one part, and that no inconsiderable one, of the audience, from a tenderness of another kind than that of compassion; and that they were less hurt by the distress of Beverley, than by finding their darling vice, their favourite folly, thus vehemently attacked by the strong lance of reason and dramatic execution.

As the Gil Blas of this author had been forced upon the town several nights after the strongest public disapprobation had been expressed, it was thought by Mr. Moore's friends that any piece acted under his name would be treated with vindictive severity. The Rev. Joseph Spence therefore permitted it, for the first four nights, to be imputed to him, but immediately afterwards threw aside the mask, as he supposed the success of the piece to be no longer doubtful; when, strange to tell! some of the very persons, who had applauded it as his work, were among the foremost to condemn it as the performance of Mr. Moore.

Part of this Tragedy was originally composed in blank verse, of which several vestiges remain.

Biographia Dramatica, vol. 2.

Substance of some Critical Remarks on this Tragedy, by a Living Authoress.

THIS Tragedy is esteemed of moral tendency, because it pourtrays the evil effects of gaming in strong colours, and the author has composed a very pathetic Drama upon that subject, though probably insufficient to convince any habitual gamester of his error, which appears to be not a passion, but a disease, influencing alike the prodigal, the thoughtless, and the vicious; and proceeding from some latent defect of the brain beyond the reach of either sermons or plays.

A spectator at the Theatre is by the representation induced to pity Mr. and Mrs. Beverley as an amiable unfortunate pair, while in the closet a reader of common understanding is likely to think the husband a weak foolish man, and the wife an inconsiderate woman, who when she resigns her jewels is by an audience regarded as performing an heroic act; but a dispassionate reader recollects she is a mother, and ought not to fling away her infant's last support solely to indulge her infatuated husband.

Stukely is so depraved that his character scarcely furnishes an excuse, except that he has been disappointed in love; but Beverley possessed all he could reasonably desire, though like many imbecile minds he appears ignorant of his happiness, and long to have harboured a latent inclination for bad company. Lewson and Charlotte, though depicted with good understandings, are unjustly made rather insipid personages serving as foils to others.

This play was not favorably received at its first appearance, owing as supposed to a party made against it; though Mr. Moore intended his Gamester as an object of pity, not abhorrence, and has throughout pleaded in extenuation of the vice.

TO THE

RIGHT HONOURABLE

HENRY PELHAM.

SIR,

IT was intended as a very fine piece of oratory by a young lawyer at the bar, who, as council against a highwayman, observed that the prosecutor had been robbed of a certain quantity of ore, which being purified by fire, cut into circular pieces, and impressed with the image of a king and the arms of a state, brought with it the necessaries, the conveniences, and the luxuries of life. I will be hanged, says an honest country gentleman who was standing by, if this flourishing fool does not mean money. But if he had said it in one word, would not all the rest have been implied?

Just such a censure as this should I deserve, if in an address to Mr. Pelham I endeavoured to enumerate the qualities he possesses. The characters of great men are generally connected with their names; and it is impossible for any one to read the name of Mr. Pelham, without connecting with it, in his own mind, the virtues of humanity.

It is therefore sufficient that I desire his acceptance of this play; that I acknowledge the obligations I owe him, and that I subscribe myself

His most grateful,

and most obedient Servant,

EDW. MOORE.

EPIGRAM

ON THE ORIGINAL REPRESENTATION OF

THE TRAGEDY OF THE GAMESTER,

By the late Arthur Murphy, Esq.

IN a Coffee-house ring, where the chat ran on Plays,
A Clergyman spoke of *The Gamester* with praise;
" I wish (said the Parson,) poor Beverley's life
" Had been sav'd, for the sake of his sister and wife."
" How, (quoth a Physician,*) should Beverley live?
" That *Lewson* escap'd, I can hardly forgive.
" With errors like those can a Scholar be bamm'd?
" I speak from the *Greek*, Sir, the Play should be damn'd."
Thus each in his way was his duty fulfilling;
The *Priest* was for *saving*, the *Doctor* for *killing*.

* Dr. Akenside is supposed to be alluded to.

PROLOGUE

Written and Spoken by Mr. Garrick.

LIKE fam'd La Mancha's Knight, who lance in hand
Mounted his steed to free the enchanted land,
Our Quixote bard sets out a monster taming,
Arm'd at all points to fight that hydra——Gaming.
Aloft on Pegasus he waves his pen,
And hurls defiance at the caitiff's den:
The first on fancied giants spent his rage,
But this has more than windmills to engage.
He combats passion, rooted in the soul,
Whose powers at once delight ye and controul;
Whose magic bondage each lost slave enjoys,
Nor wishes freedom, though the spell destroys.
To save our land from this magician's charms,
And rescue maids and matrons from his arms,
Our knight poetic comes——And oh! ye fair!
This black enchanter's wicked arts beware!
His subtle poison dims the brightest eyes,
And at his touch, each grace and beauty dies.
Love, gentleness, and joy to rage give way,
And the soft dove becomes a bird of prey.
May this our bold advent'rer break the spell,
And drive the dæmon to his native hell.

Ye slaves of passion, and ye dupes of chance,
Wake all your pow'rs from this destructive trance!
Shake off the shackles of this tyrant vice;
Hear other calls than those of cards and dice:
Be learn'd in nobler arts than arts of play,
And other debts than those of honour pay.
No longer live insensible to shame,
Lost to your country, families, and fame.

Could our romantic muse this work achieve,
Would there one honest heart in Britain grieve?
Th' attempt, though wild, would not in vain be made,
If ev'ry honest hand would lend its aid.

Dramatis Perſonæ.

MEN.

	At Drury-Lane, 1753.	At Covent-Garden, 1811.
Beverley,	Mr. Garrick.	Mr. Kemble.
Lewson,	Mr. Mossop.	Mr. C. Kemble.
Stukely,	Mr. Davies.	Mr. Egerton.
Jarvis,	Mr. Berry.	Mr. Murray.
Bates,	Mr. Burton.	Mr. Cresswell.
Dawson,	Mr. Blakes.	Mr. Claremont.
Waiter,	Mr. Ackman.	Mr. Field.
Gentlemen,	—	Messrs. Gaywood, Grant, Heath, Louis, Powers, and Sarjant.

WOMEN.

Mrs. Beverley,	Mrs. Pritchard.	Mrs. Siddons.
Charlotte,	Miss Haughton.	Mrs. Weston.
Lucy,	Mrs. Price.	Mrs. Coates.

THE

GAMESTER.

ACT I.

SCENE, *Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter MRS. BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

MRS. BEVERLEY.

BE comforted, my dear; all may be well yet. And now, methinks, the lodgings begin to look with another face. O Sister! Sister! if these were all my hardships; if all I had to complain of were no more than quitting my house, servants, equipage and shew, your pity would be weakness.

Char. Is poverty nothing, then?

Mrs. *Bev.* Nothing in the world, if it affected only me. While we had a fortune, I was the happiest of the rich: And now 'tis gone, give me but a bare subsistence and my husband's smiles, and I'll be the happiest of the poor. 'To 'me now these lodgings want nothing but their master.' Why do you look at me?

Char. That I may hate my brother.

Mrs. *Bev.* Don't talk so, Charlotte.

Char. Has he not undone you?——Oh! this pernicious vice of gaming! But methinks his usual hours of four or five in the morning might have contented him; ''twas 'misery enough to wake for him till then.' Need he have staid out all night? I shall learn to detest him?

Mrs. *Bev.* Not for the first fault. He never slept from me before.

Char. Slept from you! No, no, his nights have nothing to do with sleep. How has this one vice driven him from every virtue! Nay, from his affections, too!——The time was, sister——

Mrs. *Bev.* And is. I have no fear of his affections. Would I knew that he were safe!

Char. From ruin and his companions——But that's impossible. His poor little boy, too? What must become of him?

Mrs. *Bev*. Why want shall teach him industry. From his father's mistakes he shall learn prudence, and from his mother's resignation, patience. Poverty has no such terrors in it as you imagine. There's no condition of life, sickness and pain excepted, where happiness is excluded. The husbandman, who rises early to his labour, enjoys more welcome rest at night for it. His bread is sweeter to him; his home happier; his family dearer; his enjoyments surer. The sun that rouses him in the morning, sets in the evening to release him. All situations have their comforts, if sweet contentment dwell in the heart. But my poor Beverley has none. The thought of having ruin'd those he loves, is misery for ever to him. Would I could ease his mind of that!

Char. If he alone were ruined, 'twere just he should be punished. He is my brother, 'tis true; but when I think of what he has done; of the fortune you brought him; of his own large estate too, squandered away upon this vilest of passions, and among the vilest of wretches! O! I have no patience! My own little fortune is untouch'd, he says. Would I were sure on't.

Mrs. *Bev*. And so you may——'twould be a sin to doubt it.

Char. I will be sure on't—'twas madness in me to give it to his management. But I'll demand it from him this morning. I have a melancholy occasion for it.

Mrs. *Bev*. What occasion?

Char. To support a sister.

Mrs. *Bev*. No; I have no need on't. Take it, and reward a lover with it. The generous Lewson deserves much more. Why won't you make him happy?

Char. Because my sister is miserable.

Mrs. *Bev*. You must not think so. I have my jewels left yet. 'I'll sell 'em to supply our wants;' and when all's gone, these hands shall toil for our support. The poor should be industrious—Why those tears, Charlotte?

Char. They flow in pity for you.

Mrs. *Bev*. All may be well yet. When he has nothing to lose I shall fetter him in these arms again; and then what is it to be poor?

Char. Cure him but of this destructive passion, and my uncle's death may retrieve all yet.

Mrs. *Bev.* Ay, Charlotte, could we cure him. But the disease of play admits no cure but poverty; and the loss of another fortune would but encrease his shame and his affliction. Will Mr. Lewson call this morning?

Char. He said so last night. He gave me hints, too, that he had suspicions of our friend Stukely.

Mrs. *Bev.* Not of treachery to my husband? That he loves play, I know; but surely he is honest.

Char. He would fain be thought so; therefore I doubt him. Honesty needs no pains to set itself off.

Enter LUCY.

Mrs. *Bev.* What now, Lucy?

Lucy. Your old Steward, Madam. I had not the heart to deny him admittance, the good old man begg'd so hard for it. [*Exit.*

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs. *Bev.* Is this well, Jarvis? I desired you to avoid me.

Jar. Did you, Madam? I am an old man, and had forgot. Perhaps, too, you forbad my tears; but I am old, Madam, and age will be forgetful.

Mrs. *Bev.* The faithful creature! how he moves me. [*To Charlotte.*

Char. Not to have seen him had been cruelty.

Jar. I have forgot these apartments, too. I remember none such in my young master's house; and yet I have lived in it these five and twenty years. His good father would not have dismiss'd me.

Mrs. *Bev.* He had no reason, Jarvis.

Jar. I was faithful to him while he lived, and when he died, he bequeath'd me to his son. I have been faithful to him, too.

Mrs. *Bev.* I know it, I know it, Jarvis.

'*Char.* We both know it.'

Jar. I 'am an old man, Madam, and' have not a long time to live. I ask'd but to have died with him, and he dismiss'd me.

Mrs. *Bev.* Pr'ythee no more of this! 'Twas his poverty that dismiss'd you.

Jar. Is he indeed so poor, then?—Oh! he was the joy of my old heart—— But must his creditors have all? — And have they sold his house, too? His father built it when he was but a prating boy. The times that I have carried him in these arms! And, Jarvis, says he, when a beggar has ask'd charity of me, why should people be poor? You shan't be poor, Jarvis; if I was a king, no-body should be poor. Yet he is poor. And then he was so brave! — O he was a brave little boy! And yet so merciful he'd not have killed the gnat that stung him.

Mrs. *Bev.* Speak to him, Charlotte; for I cannot.

' *Char.* When I have wiped my eyes.'

Jar. I have a little money, Madam; it might have been more, but I have loved the poor. All that I have is yours.

Mrs. *Bev.* No, Jarvis: we have enough yet. I thank you, though, and will deserve your goodness.

Jar. But shall I see my master? And will he let me attend him in his distresses? I'll be no expence to him; and 'twill kill me to be refused. Where is he, madam?

Mrs. *Bev.* Not at home, Jarvis. You shall see him another time.

Char. To-morrow, or the next day—O, Jarvis! What a change is here.

Jar. A change indeed, madam! My old heart akes at it. And yet, methinks —— But here's somebody coming.

Enter Lucy *with* Stukely.

Lucy. Mr. Stukely, madam. [*Exit.*

Stu. Good morning to you, ladies. Mr. Jarvis, your servant. Where's my friend, madam? [*To Mrs. Beverley.*

Mrs. *Bev.* I should have ask'd that question of you. Have you seen him to-day?

Stu. No, madam.

Char. Nor last night?

Stu. Last night! Did he not come home then?

Mrs. *Bev.* No. Were you not together?

Stu. At the beginning of the evening; But not since. Where can he have staid?

Char. You call yourself his friend, Sir; why do you encourage him in this madness of gaming?

Stu. You have ask'd me that question before, madam;

and I told you my concern was that I could not save him; Mr. Beverley is a man, madam; and if the most friendly entreaties have no effect upon him, I have no other means. My purse has been his, even to the injury of my fortune. If that has been encouragement, I deserve censure; but I meant it to retrieve him.

Mrs. *Bev.* I don't doubt it, Sir; and I thank you—But where did you leave him last night?

Stu. At Wilson's, madam, if I ought to tell; in company I did not like. Possibly he may be there still. Mr. Jarvis knows the house, I believe.

Jar. Shall I go, madam?

Mrs. *Bev.* No, he may take it ill.

Char. He may go as from himself.

Stu. And, if he pleases, madam, without naming me. I am faulty myself, and should conceal the errors of a friend. But I can refuse nothing here. [*Bowing to the ladies.*

Jar. I would fain see him, methinks.

Mrs. *Bev.* Do so, then. But take care how you upbraid him. I have never upbraided him.

Jar. Would I could bring him comfort! [*Exit.*

Stu. Don't be too much alarm'd, madam. All men have their errors, and their times of seeing 'em. Perhaps my friend's time is not come yet. But he has an uncle; and old men don't live for ever. You should look forward, madam; we are taught how to value a second fortune by the loss of a first. [*Knocking at the door.*

Mrs. *Bev.* Hark!—No—that knocking was too rude for Mr. Beverley. Pray heaven he be well!

Stu. Never doubt it, madam. You shall be well, too—Every thing shall be well. [*Knocking again.*

Mrs. *Bev.* The knocking is a little loud, tho'—Who waits there? Will none of you answer?—None of you, did I say?—Alas! what was I thinking of?—I had forgot myself.

Char. I will go, sister——But do not be alarm'd so. [*Exit.*

Stu. What extraordinary accident have you to fear, madam?

Mrs. *Bev.* I beg your pardon; but it is ever thus with me in Mr. Beverley's absence. No one knocks at the door, but I fancy it is a messenger of ill news.

Stu. You are too fearful, madam; it was but one night

of absence; and if ill thoughts intrude (as love is always doubtful) think of your worth and beauty, and drive them from your breast.

Mrs. *Bev.* What thoughts? I have no thoughts that wrong my husband.

Stu. Such thoughts indeed would wrong him. The world is full of slander; and every wretch that knows himself unjust, charges his neighbour with like passions; and by the general frailty hides his own—If you are wise, and would be happy, turn a deaf ear to such reports. It is ruin to believe them.

Mrs. *Bev.* Ay, worse than ruin. It would be to sin against conviction. Why was it mentioned?

Stu. To guard you against rumour. The sport of half mankind is mischief; and for a single error they make men devils. If their tales reach you, disbelieve them.

Mrs. *Bev.* What tales? By whom? Why told? I have heard nothing—or if I had, with all his errors, my Beverley's firm faith admits no doubt—It is my safety, my seat of rest and joy, while the storm threatens round me. I will not forsake it. [*Stukely sighs and looks down.*] Why turn you, sir, away? and why that sigh?

Stu. I was attentive, madam; and sighs will come we know not why. Perhaps I have been too busy—If it should seem so, impute my zeal to friendship, that meant to guard you against evil tongues. Your Beverley is wrong'd, slander'd most vilely—My life upon his truth.

Mrs. *Bev.* And mine too. Who is it that doubts it? But no matter——I am prepared, sir——Yet why this caution? ——You are my husband's friend; I think you mine too; the common friend of both. [*Pauses.*] I had been unconcern'd else.

Stu. For heaven's sake, madam, be so still! I meant to guard you against suspicion, not to alarm it.

Mrs. *Bev.* Nor have you, sir. Who told you of suspicion? I have a heart it cannot reach.

Stu. Then I am happy—I would say more—but am prevented.

Enter CHARLOTTE.

Mrs. *Bev.* Who was it, Charlotte?

Char. What a heart has that Jarvis!——A creditor, sister.

But the good old man has taken him away——Do not distress his wife! Do not distress his sister! I could hear him say. It is cruel to distress the afflicted——And when he saw me at the door, he begg'd pardon that his friend had knock'd so loud.

Stu. I wish I had known of this. Was it a large demand, madam?

Char. I heard not that; but visits such as these, we must expect often.—Why so distress'd, sister? This is no new affliction.

Mrs. *Bev.* No, Charlotte; but I am faint with watching—quite sunk and spiritless—Will you excuse me, sir? I'll to my chamber, and try to rest a little.

Stu. Good thoughts go with you, madam. *(Exit Mrs. Beverley.)* My bait is taken then. *(Aside.)* Poor Mrs. Beverley! How my heart grieves to see her thus!

Char. Cure her, and be a friend then.

Stu. How cure her, madam?

Char. Reclaim my brother.

Stu. Ay; give him a new creation; or breathe another soul into him. I will think on it, madam. Advice I see is thankless.

Char. Useless I am sure it is, if through mistaken friendship, or other motives, you feed his passion with your purse, and sooth it by example. Physicians to cure fevers keep from the patient's thirsty lip the cup that would inflame him; you give it to his hands—*(a knocking.)* Hark! Sir—These are my brother's desperate symptoms——Another creditor.

Stu. One not so easily got rid of——What, Lewson!

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Madam, your servant—Yours, sir. I was enquiring for you at your lodgings.

Stu. This morning? You had business then?

Lew. You will call it by another name, perhaps. Where is Mr. Beverley, madam?

Char. We have sent to enquire for him.

Lew. Is he abroad then? He did not use to go out so early.

Char. No; nor to stay out so late.

Lew. Is that the case? I am sorry for it. But Mr. Stukely, perhaps, may direct you to him.

Stu. I have already, sir.—But what was your business with me?

Lew. To congratulate you upon your late successes at play. Poor Beverley! But you are his friend; and there is a comfort in having successful friends.

Stu. And what am I to understand by this?

Lew. That Beverley is a poor man, with a rich friend—That is all.

Stu. Your words would mean something, I suppose. Another time, sir, I shall desire an explanation.

Lew. And why not now? I am no dealer in long sentences. A minute or two will do for me.

Stu. But not for me, sir. I am slow of apprehension, and must have time and privacy. A lady's presence engages my attention—Another morning I may be found at home.

Lew. Another morning then, I will wait upon you.

Stu. I shall expect you, sir. Madam, your servant. [*Exit.*

Char. What mean you by this?

Lew. To hint to him that I know him.

Char. How know him? Mere doubt and supposition!

Lew. I shall have proof soon.

Char. And what then? Would you risk your life to be his punisher?

Lew. My life, madam! Do not be afraid. And yet I am happy in your concern for me. But let it content you that I know this Stukely—It would be as easy to make him honest as brave.

Char. And what do you intend to do?

Lew. Nothing, until I have proof. Yet my suspicions are well grounded——But methinks, madam, I am acting here without authority. Could I have leave to call Mr. Beverley brother, his concerns would be my own. Why will you make my services appear officious?

Char. You know my reasons, and should not press me. But I am cold, you say; and cold I will be, while a poor sister is destitute——My heart bleeds for her! And until I see her sorrows moderated, love has no joys for me.

Lew. 'Can I be less a friend by being a brother? I would 'not say an unkind thing——But the pillar of your house 'is shaken. Prop it with another, and it shall stand firm 'again——You must comply.'

Char. 'And will—when I have peace within myself.' But let us change the subject—Your business here this morning is with my sister. Misfortunes press too hard upon her: Yet till to day she has borne them nobly.

Lew. Where is she?

Char. Gone to her chamber——Her spirits failed her.

Lew. I hear her coming—Let what has passed with Stukely be a secret——She has already too much to trouble her.

Enter MRS. BEVERLEY.

Mrs. *Bev.* Good morning, sir; I heard your voice, and as I thought, enquiring for me——Where is Mr. Stukely, Charlotte?

Char. This moment gone——You have been in tears, sister, but here is a friend shall comfort you.

Lew. Or if I add to your distresses, I will beg your pardon, madam. The sale of your house and furniture was finish'd yesterday.

Mrs. *Bev.* I know it, sir. I know too your generous reason for putting me in mind of it. But you have obliged me too much already.

Lew. There are trifles, madam, which I know you have set a value on: Those I have purchased, and will deliver. I have a friend too that esteems you—He has bought largely; and will call nothing his, till he has seen you. If a visit to him would not be painful, he has begg'd it may be this morning.

Mrs. *Bev.* Not painful in the least. My pain is from the kindness of my friends. Why am I to be obliged beyond the power of return?

Lew. You shall repay us at your own time. I have a coach waiting at the door—Shall we have your company, madam? [*to Charlotte.*

Char. No. My brother may return soon; I will stay and receive him.

Mrs. *Bev.* He may want a comforter, perhaps. But do not upbraid him, Charlotte. We shall not be absent long—Come, sir, since I must be so obliged.

Lew. It is I that am obliged. An hour or less will be sufficient for us. We shall find you at home, madam?

[*to Charlotte, and exit with Mrs. Beverley.*

Char. Certainly. 'I have but little inclination to appear 'abroad—O! this brother! this brother! To what wretchedness has he reduced us.' [*Exit.*

SCENE *changes to Stukely's Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY.

Stu. That Lewson suspects me, it is too plain. Yet why should he suspect me?—I appear the friend of Beverley as much as he.—But I am rich it seems—and so I am; thanks to another's folly and my own wisdom. To what use is wisdom, but to take advantage of the weak? This Beverley is my fool; I cheat him, and he calls me friend——But more business must be done yet. His wife's jewels are unsold; so is the reversion of his uncle's estate. I must have these too—And then there is a treasure above all——I love his wife——Before she knew this Beverley I loved her; but like a cringing fool, bowed at a distance, while he stept in and won her—Never, never will I forgive him for it. 'My 'pride, as well as love, is wounded by this conquest. I 'must have vengeance.' Those hints, this morning, were well thrown in——Already they have fasten'd on her. If jealousy should weaken her affections, want may corrupt her virtue—'My heart rejoices in the hope'—These jewels may do much. He shall demand them of her; which, when mine, shall be converted to special purposes——what now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bates. Is it a wonder then to see me? The forces are all in readiness, and only wait for orders. Where is Beverley?

Stu. At last night's rendezvous, waiting for me. Is Dawson with you?

Bates. Dress'd like a nobleman; with money in his pocket, and a set of dice that shall deceive the devil.

Stu. That fellow has a head to undo a nation. But for the rest, they are such low-manner'd, ill-looking dogs, I wonder Beverley has not suspected them.

Bates. No matter for manners and looks. Do you supply them with money, and they are gentlemen by profession—The passion of gaming casts such a mist before the eyes, that the nobleman shall be surrounded with sharpers, and imagine himself in the best company.

Stu. There is that Williams, too—It was he, I suppose, that called at Beverley's with the note this morning. What directions did you give him?

Bates. To knock loud, and be clamorous. Did not you see him?

Stu. No. The fool sneak'd off with Jarvis. Had he appeared within doors, as directed, the note had been discharged. I waited there on purpose. I want the women to think well of me; for Lewson is grown suspicious; he told me so himself.

Bates. What answer did you make him?

Stu. A short one——That I would see him soon, for farther explanation.

Bates. We must take care of him. But what have we to do with Beverley? Dawson and the rest are wondering at you.

Stu. Why let them wonder. I have designs above their narrow reach. They see me lend him money; and they stare at me. But they are fools. I want him to believe me beggar'd by him.

Bates. And what then!

Stu. Ay, there is the question; but no matter. At night you may know more. He waits for me at Wilson's. I told the women where to find him.

Bates. To what purpose?

Stu. To save suspicion. It look'd friendly; and they thankd me. Old Jarvis was dispatch'd to him.

Bates. And may intreat him home.

Stu. No; he expects money from me: But I will have none. His wife's jewels must go—Women are easy creatures, and refuse nothing where they love——Follow to Wilson's; 'but be sure he sees you not. You are a man of 'character, you know; of prudence and discretion. Wait 'for me in an outer room; I shall have business for you 'presently.' Come, sir;

Let drudging fools by honesty grow great;
The shorter road to riches is deceit. [*Exeunt*.

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE, *A Gaming House, with a Table, Box, Dice, &c.*

BEVERLEY *is discovered sitting.*

Bev. WHY, what a world is this! The slave, that digs for gold, receives his daily pittance, and sleeps contented; while those, for whom he labours, convert their good to mischief; making abundance the means of want. 'O shame! shame! '—Had fortune given me but a little, that little had been 'still my own. But plenty leads to waste; and shallow 'streams maintain their currents, while swelling rivers beat 'down their banks, and leave their channels empty.' What had I to do with play? I wanted nothing. My wishes and my means were equal. The poor followed me with blessings; love scattered roses on my pillow, and morning waked me to delight——O, bitter thought! that leads to what I was, by what I am! I would forget both——Who's there?

Enter a WAITER.

Wait. A gentleman, sir, enquires for you.

Bev. He might have used less ceremony. Stukely, I suppose?

Wait. No, sir, a stranger.

Bev. Well, shew him in. [*Exit Waiter.*] A messenger from Stukely, then! From him that has undone me!——Yet all in friendship; and now he lends me from his little, to bring back fortune to me.

Enter JARVIS.

Jarvis! Why this intrusion?——Your absence had been kinder.

Jar. I came in duty, sir. If it be troublesome——

Bev. It is——I would be private—hid even from myself. Who sent you hither?

Jar. One that would persuade you home again. My mistress is not well; her tears told me so.

Bev. Go with thy duty there then—'But does she weep?

I am to blame to let her weep.' Pr'ythee be gone: I have no business for thee.

Jar. Yes, sir; to lead you from this place. I am your servant still. Your prosperous fortune bless'd my old age. If that has left you, I must not leave you.

Bev. Not leave me! Recall past time then; or through this sea of storms and darkness, shew me a star to guide me —But what can'st thou?

Jar. The little that I can, I will. You have been generous to me—I would not offend you, sir—but—

Bev. No. Think'st thou I'd ruin thee, too! I have enough of shame already—My wife! my wife! Would'st thou believe it, Jarvis? I have not seen her all this long night—I, who have loved her so, that every hour of absence seemed as a gap in life. But other bonds have held me—O! I have played the boy! dropping my counters in the stream, and reaching to redeem 'em, have lost myself. Why wilt thou follow misery? Or if thou wilt, go to thy mistress. She has no guilt to sting her, and therefore may be comforted.'

Jar. For pity's sake, sir!—I have no heart to see this change.

Bev. Nor I to bear it—How speaks the world of me, Jarvis?

Jar. As of a good man dead. Of one, who walking in a dream, fell down a precipice. The world is sorry for you.

Bev. Ay, and pities me. Says it not so? But I was born to infamy—I'll tell thee what it says. It calls me villain; a treacherous husband; a cruel father; a false brother; one lost to nature and her charities. Or to say all in one short word, it calls me—Gamester. Go to thy mistress—I'll see her presently.

Jar. And why not now? Rude people press upon her; loud, bawling creditors; wretches, who know no pity—I met one at the door; he would have seen my mistress. I wanted means of present payment, so promised it to-morrow. But others may be pressing; and she has grief enough already. Your absence hangs too heavy on her.

Bev. Tell her I'll come, then. I have a moment's business. But what hast thou to do with my distresses? Thy honesty has left thee poor; and age wants comfort. Keep what thou hast for cordials; lest between thee and the grave,

misery steal in. I have a friend shall counsel me—This is that friend.

Enter STUKELY.

Stu. How fares it, Beverley? Honest Mr. Jarvis, well met. I hoped to find you here. That viper Williams! Was it not he that troubled you this morning?

Jar. My mistress heard him then?—I am sorry that she heard him.

Bev. And Jarvis promised payment.

Stu. That must not be. Tell him I'll satisfy him.

Jar. Will you, sir? Heaven will reward you for it.

Bev. Generous Stukely! Friendship like yours, had it ability like will, would more than balance the wrongs of fortune.

Stu. You think too kindly of me—Make haste to Williams; his clamours may be rude else. [*to Jarvis.*

Jar. And my master will go home again—Alas! Sir, we know of hearts there breaking for his absence. [*Exit.*

Bev. Would I were dead!

Stu. 'Or turned hermit; counting a string of beads in a 'dark cave; or under a weeping willow, praying for mercy 'on the wicked.' Ha! ha! ha!—Pr'ythee be a man, and leave dying to disease and old age. Fortune may be ours again; at least we'll try for it.

Bev. No; it has fool'd us on too far.

Stu. Ay, ruin'd us; and therefore we'll sit down contented. These are the despondings of men without money; but let the shining ore chink in the pocket, and folly turns to wisdom. We are fortune's children—True, she is a fickle mother; but shall we droop because she is peevish?—No; she has smiles in store. And these her frowns are meant to brighten them.

Bev. Is this a time for levity? But you are single in the ruin, and therefore may talk lightly of it. With me 'tis complicated misery.

Stu. You censure me unjustly—I but assumed these spirits to cheer my friend. Heaven knows he wants a comforter.

Bev. What new misfortune?

Stu. I would have brought you money; but lenders want securities. What's to be done? All that was mine is yours already.

Bev. And there's the double weight that sinks me. I have undone my friend, too; one, who to save a drowning wretch, reach'd out his hand, and perish'd with him.

Stu. Have better thoughts.

Bev. Whence are they to proceed?—I have nothing left.

Stu. [*Sighing.*] Then we're indeed undone. What nothing? No moveables? Nor useless trinkets? Bawbles lock'd up in caskets to starve their owners?—I have ventured deeply for you.

Bev. Therefore this heart-ake; for I am lost beyond all hope.

Stu. No; means may be found to save us, Jarvis is rich. Who made him so? This is no time for ceremony.

Bev. And is it for dishonesty? The good old man! Shall I rob him too? My friend would grieve for it. No; let the little that he has, buy food and cloathing for him.

Stu. Good morning, then. [*Going.*

Bev. So hasty! Why then good morning.

Stu. And when we meet again, upbraid me. Say it was I that tempted you. Tell Lewson so; and tell him I have wrong'd you—He has suspicions of me, and will thank you.

Bev. No; we have been companions in a rash voyage, and the same storm has wreck'd us both. Mine shall be self upbraidings.

Stu. And will they feed us? You deal unkindly by me. I have sold and borrow'd for you, while land or credit last; and now, when fortune should be tried, and my heart whispers me success, I am deserted: turn'd loose to beggary, while you have hoards.

Bev. What hoards? Name 'em, and take 'em.

Stu. Jewels.

Bev. And shall this thriftless hand seize them too? My poor, poor wife! Must she lose all? I would not wound her so.

Stu. Nor I, but from necessity. One effort more, and fortune may grow kind. I have unusual hopes.

Bev. Think of some other means, then.

Stu. I have; and you rejected 'em.

Bev. Pr'ythee let me be a man.

Stu. Ay, and your friend a poor one. But I have done. And for these trinkets of a woman, why, let her keep 'em to

deck out pride with, and shew a laughing world that she has finery to starve in.

Bev. No; she shall yield up all. My friend demands it. But need he have talk'd lightly of her? The jewels that she values are truth and innocence——Those will adorn her ever; and for the rest, she wore 'em for a husband's pride and to his wants will give 'em. Alas! you know her not. Where shall we meet?

Stu. No matter. I have changed my mind. Leave me to a prison; 'tis the reward of friendship.

Bev. Perish mankind first—Leave you to a prison! No; fallen as you see me, I'm not that wretch. Nor would I change this heart, o'er-charged as 'tis with folly and misfortune, for one most prudent and most happy, if callous to a friend's distresses.

Stu. You are too warm.

Bev. In such a cause, not to be warm is to be frozen. Farewell. I'll meet you at your lodgings.

Stu. Reflect a little. The jewels may be lost. Better not hazard 'em——I was too pressing.

Bev. And I ungrateful. Reflection takes up time. I have no leisure for't. Within an hour expect me. [*Exit.*

Stu. The thoughtless, shallow prodigal! We shall have sport at night, then—But hold—The jewels are not ours yet —The lady may refuse 'em——The husband may relent too—'Tis more than probable——I'll write a note to Beverley, and the contents shall spur him to demand 'em ——But am I grown this rogue thro' avarice? No; I have warmer motives, love and revenge—Ruin the husband and the wife's virtue may be bid for! '’Tis of uncertain value, 'and sinks, or rises in the purchase, as want, or wealth, or 'passion governs. The poor part cheaply with it; rich 'dames, tho' pleased with selling, will have high prices for't. 'Your love-sick girls give it for oaths and lying. But 'tender wives, who boast of honour and affections, keep it 'against famine—Why, let famine come then; I am in 'haste to purchase.'

Enter BATES.

Look to your men, Bates; there's money stirring. We meet to-night upon this spot. Hasten and tell 'em so. 'Beverley calls upon me at my lodgings, and we return 'together.' Hasten, I say, the rogues will scatter else.

Bates. Not 'till their leader bids 'em.

Stu. Come on, then. Give 'em the word and follow me; I must advise with you——This is a day of business. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to Beverley's lodgings.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Char. Your looks are changed, too; there's wildness in 'em. My wretched sister! How will it grieve her to see you thus!

Bev. No, no——a little rest will ease me. And for your Lewson's kindness to her, it has my thanks; I have no more to give him.

Char. Yes; a sister and her fortune. I trifle with him and he complains.——My looks, he says, are cold upon him. He thinks too——

Bev. That I have lost your fortune——He dares not think so.

Char. Nor does he——You are too quick at guessing. He cares not if you had. That care is mine—I lent it you to husband, and now I claim it.

Bev. You have suspicions, then.

Char. Cure 'em, and give it me.

Bev. To stop a sister's chiding.

Char. To vindicate her brother.

Bev. How if he needs no vindication?

Char. I would fain hope so.

Bev. Ay, would and cannot. Leave it to time, then; 'twill satisfy all doubts.

Char. Mine are already satisfied.

Bev. 'Tis well. And when the subject is renewed, speak to me like a sister, and I will answer like a brother.

Char. To tell me I'm a beggar.—Why, tell it now. I that can bear the ruin of those dearer to me, the ruin of a sister and her infant, can bear that too.

Bev. No more of this—you wring my heart.

Char. Would that the misery were all your own! But innocence must suffer—Unthinking rioter! whose home was heaven to him; an angel dwelt there, and a little cherub, that crown'd his days with blessings—How he has lost this heaven to league with devils!

Bev. Forbear, I say; Reproaches come too late; they search, but cure not: And for the fortune you demand, we'll talk to-morrow on't: our tempers may be milder.

Char. Or, if 'tis gone, why farewell all. I claim'd it for a sister. 'She holds my heart in her's; and every pang 'she feels tears it in pieces'—But I'll upbraid no more. What heaven permits, perhaps, it may ordain; 'and sorrow 'then is sinful.' Yet that the husband! father! brother! should be its instruments of vengeance!—'Tis grievous to know that.

Bev. If you're my sister, spare the remembrance——it wounds too deeply. To-morrow shall clear all; and when the worst is known, it may be better than your fears. Comfort my wife; and for the pains of absence, I'll make atonement. The world may yet go well with us.

Char. See where she comes!——Look chearfully upon her——Affections such as her's are prying, and lend those eyes that read the soul.

Enter MRS. BEVERLEY *and* LEWSON.

Mrs. *Bev.* My life!

Bev. My love! How fares it? I have been a truant husband.

Mrs. *Bev.* But we meet now, and that heals all—Doubts and alarms I have had; but in this dear embrace I bury and forget 'em—My friend here (*pointing to* Lewson) has been indeed a friend. Charlotte, 'tis you must thank him: Your brother's thanks and mine are of too little value.

Bev. Yet what we have we'll pay. I thank you, Sir, and am obliged. I would say more, but that your goodness to the wife, upbraids the husband's follies. Had I been wise, she had not trespass'd on your bounty.

Lew. Nor has she trespass'd. The little I have done, acceptance over-pays.

Char. So friendship thinks——

Mrs. *Bev.* And doubles obligations by striving to conceal 'em——We'll talk another time on't.——You are too thoughtful, love.

Bev. No, I have reason for these thoughts.

Char. And hatred for the cause——Would you had that too!

Bev. I have——The cause was avarice.

Char. And who the tempter?

Bev. A ruin'd friend——ruin'd by too much kindness.

Lew. Ay, worse than ruin'd; stabb'd in his fame, mortally stabb'd—Riches can't cure him.

Bev. Or, if they could, those I have drain'd him of. Something of this he hinted in the morning—That Lewson had suspicions of him—Why these suspicions? [*angrily.*]

Lew. At school we knew this Stukely. A cunning plodding boy he was, sordid and cruel. Slow at his task, but quick at shifts and tricking. He schemed out mischief, that others might be punish'd; and would tell his tale with so much art, that for the lash he merited, rewards and praise were given him. Shew me a boy with such a mind, and time that ripens manhood in him, shall ripen vice too—I'll prove him, and lay him open to you—'Till then be warn'd—I know him, and therefore shun him.

Bev. As I would those that wrong him—You are too busy, Sir.

Mrs. *Bev.* No, not too busy—Mistaken, perhaps—That had been milder.

Lew. No matter, Madam. I can bear this, and praise the heart that prompts it—Pity such friendship should be so placed.

Bev. Again, Sir! But I'll bear, too—You wrong him, Lewson, and will be sorry for it.

Char. Ay, when it is proved he wrongs him. The world is full of hypocrites.

Bev. And Stukely one—So you'd infer, I think—I'll hear no more of this—my heart akes for him—I have undone him.

Lew. The world says otherwise.

Bev. The world is false, then—I have business with you, love. [*to Mrs. Bev.*] We'll leave 'em to their rancour. [*going.*

Char. No; we shall find room within for it.—Come this way, Sir. [*to Lewson.*

Lew. Another time my friend will thank me; that time is hastening too. [*Exeunt Lewson & Charlotte.*

Bev. They hurt me beyond bearing—Is Stukely false? Then honesty has left us! 'Twere sinning against Heaven to think so.

Mrs. *Bev.* I never doubted him.

Bev. No; you are charity. Meekness and ever-during patience live in that heart, and love that knows no change—Why did I ruin you?

Mrs. *Bev.* You have not ruin'd me. I have no wants when you are present, nor wishes in your absence but to be blest with your return. Be but resign'd to what has happened, and I am rich beyond the dreams of avarice.

Bev. My generous girl!—But memory will be busy; still crowding on my thoughts, to sour the present by the past. I have another pang, too.

Mrs. *Bev.* Tell it, and let me cure it.

Bev. That friend—that generous friend, whose fame they have traduced—I have undone him too. While he had means he lent me largely; and now a prison must be his portion.

Mrs. *Bev.* No; I hope otherwise.

Bev. To hope must be to act. The charitable wish feeds not the hungry—Something must be done.

Mrs. *Bev.* What?

Bev. In bitterness of heart he told me, just now he told me, I had undone him. Could I hear that, and think of happiness? No; I have disclaim'd it, while he is miserable.

Mrs. *Bev.* The world may mend with us, and then we may be grateful. There is comfort in that hope.

Bev. Ay; it is the sick man's cordial, his promised cure; while in preparing it the patient dies.——What now?

Enter LUCY.

Lucy. A letter, Sir. [*delivers it and exit.*

Bev. The hand is Stukely's. [*opens and reads it to himself.*

Mrs. *Bev.* And brings good news—at least I will hope so—What says he, love?

Bev. Why this—too much for patience. Yet he directs me to conceal it from you. [*reads.*

'Let your haste to see me be the only proof of your 'esteem for me. I have determined, since we parted, 'to bid adieu to England; chusing rather to forsake my 'country, than to owe my freedom in it to the means we 'talk'd of. Keep this a secret at home, and hasten to 'the ruin'd R. STUKELY.'

Ruin'd by friendship! I must relieve or follow him.

Mrs. *Bev.* Follow him, did you say? Then I am lost, indeed!

Bev. O this infernal vice! how has it sunk me! A vice, whose highest joy was poor to my domestic happiness. Yet how have I pursued it! turn'd all my comforts to bitterest pangs! and all my smiles to tears. Damn'd, Damn'd infatuation!

Mrs. *Bev.* Be cool, my life! What are the means the letter talks of? Have you—have I those means? Tell me, and ease me. I have no life while you are wretched.

Bev. No, no; it must not be. It is I alone have sinn'd; it is I alone must suffer. You shall reserve those means to keep my child and his wrong'd mother from want and wretchedness.

Mrs. *Bev.* What means?

Bev. I came to rob you of 'em—but cannot—dare not—Those jewels are your sole support—I should be more than monster to request 'em.

Mrs. *Bev.* My jewels? Trifles, not worth the speaking of, if weigh'd against a husband's peace; but let them purchase that, and the world's wealth is of less value.

Bev. Amazing goodness! How little do I seem before such virtue!

Mrs. *Bev.* No more, my love. I kept 'em 'till occasion call'd to use 'em; now is the occasion, and I will resign 'em chearfully.

Bev. Why, we'll be rich in love, then. But this excess of kindness melts me. Yet for a friend one would do much He has denied me nothing.

Mrs. *Bev.* Come to my closet—But let him manage wisely. We have no more to give him.

Bev. Where learnt my love this excellence?——'Tis Heaven's own teaching: That Heaven, which to an angel's form has given a mind more lovely. I am unworthy of you, but will deserve you better.

Henceforth my follies and neglects shall cease,
And all to come be penitence and peace;
Vice shall no more attract me with her charms,
Nor pleasure reach me, but in these dear arms.

[*Exeunt.*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE, *Stukely's Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES.

Stu. So runs the world, Bates. Fools are the natural prey of knaves; nature design'd them so, when she made lambs for wolves. The laws that fear and policy have framed, nature disclaims: She knows but two; and those are force and cunning. The nobler law is force; but then there's danger in't; while cunning, like a skilful miner, works safely and unseen.

Bates. And therefore wisely. Force must have nerves and sinews; cunning wants neither. The dwarf that has it shall trip the giant's heels up.

Stu. And bind him to the ground. Why, we'll erect a shrine for nature, and be her oracles. Conscience is weakness; Fear made it, and fear maintains it. The dread of shame, inward reproaches, and fictitious burnings swell out the phantom. Nature knows none of this; her laws are freedom.

Bates. Sound doctrine, and well deliver'd!

Stu. We are sincere, too, and practise what we teach. Let the grave pedant say as much—But now to business. The jewels are disposed of; and Beverley again worth money. 'He waits to count his gold out, and then comes hither.' If my design succeeds, this night we finish with him. Go to your lodgings and be busy—You understand conveyances, and can make ruin sure.

Bates. Better stop here. The sale of this reversion may be talk'd of—There's danger in't.

Stu. No, 'tis the mark I aim at. We'll thrive and laugh. You are the purchaser, and there's the payment [*giving a pocket-book*], he thinks you rich; and so you shall be. Enquire for titles, and deal hardly; 'twill look like honesty.

Bates. How if he suspects us?

Stu. Leave it to me. I study hearts, and when to work upon 'em. Go to your lodgings; and if we come be

busy over papers. Talk of a thoughtless age, of gaming and extravagance; you have a face for it.

Bates. A feeling too that would avoid it. We push too far; but I have caution'd you. If it ends ill, you'll think of me—and so adieu. [*Exit.*]

Stu. This fellow sins by halves; his fears are conscience to him. I'll turn these fears to use. Rogues that dread shame will still be greater rogues to hide their guilt—'This 'shall be thought of.' Lewson grows troublesome—We must get rid of him—He knows too much. I have a tale for Beverley; part of it truth, too—He shall call Lewson to account—If it succeeds, 'tis well: if not, we must try other means—But here he comes—I must dissemble.

Enter BEVERLEY.

Look to the door there! [*in a seeming fright*]—My friend!—I thought of other visitors.

Bev. No: these shall guard you from 'em—[*offering notes*] Take 'em and use 'em cautiously—The world deals hardly by us.

Stu. And shall I leave you destitute? No: Your wants are the greatest. Another climate may treat me kinder. The shelter of to-night takes me from this.

Bev. Let these be your support then—Yet is there need of parting? I may have means again; we'll share 'em, and live wisely.

Stu. No. I should tempt you on. Habit is nature in me; ruin cannot cure it. Even now I would be gaming. Taught by experience as I am, and knowing this poor sum is all that 's left us, I am for venturing still——And say I am to blame——Yet will this little supply our wants? No, we must put it out to usury. Whether it is madness in me, or some restless impulse of good fortune, I yet am ignorant; but——

Bev. Take it, and succeed then; I'll try no more.

Stu. 'Tis surely impulse; it pleads so strongly——But you are cold——We'll e'en part here then. And for this last reserve, keep it for better uses; I'll have none of it. I thank you though, and will seek fortune singly——One thing I had forgot——

Bev. What is it?

Stu. Perhaps, 'twere best forgotten. But I am open in

my nature, and zealous for the honour of my friend—Lewson speaks freely of you.

Bev. Of you I know he does.

Stu. I can forgive him for it; but for my friend I am angry.

Bev. What says he of me?

Stu. That Charlotte's fortune is embezzled——He talks of it loudly.

Bev. He shall be silenced then—How heard you of it?

Stu. From many. He question'd Bates about it. You must account with him—he says.

Bev. Or he with me——and soon, too.

Stu. Speak mildly to him; cautions are best.

Bev. I will think on it—But whither go you?

Stu. From poverty and prisons—No matter whither. If fortune changes you may hear from me.

Bev. May these be prosperous, then. [*offering the notes which he refuses*] Nay, they are your's—I have sworn it, and will have nothing—Take 'em and use 'em.

Stu. Singly I will not. My cares are for my friend; for his lost fortune, and ruin'd family. All separate interests I disclaim. Together we have fallen; together we must rise. My heart, my honour and affections all will have it so.

Bev. I am weary of being fool'd.

Stu. And so am I—Here let us part, then—These bodings of good-fortune shall all be stifled; I'll call 'em folly, and forget 'em—' This one embrace, and then' farewell.

' [*offering to embrace.*'

Bev. No; stay a moment——How my poor heart's distracted! I have these bodings too; but whether caught from you, or prompted by my good or evil genius, I know not—The trial shall determine—And yet, my wife.

Stu. Ay, ay, she'll chide.

Bev. No; my chidings are all here.

[*pointing to his heart.*

Stu. I will not persuade you.

Bev. I am persuaded; by reason, too; the strongest reason; necessity. Oh! could I but regain the height I have fallen from, heaven should forsake me in my latest hour, if I again mix'd in these scenes, or sacrificed the husband's peace, his joy and best affections, to avarice and infamy.

Stu. I have resolved like you; and since our motives are so honest, why should we fear success?

Bev. Come on, then—Where shall we meet?

Stu. At Wilson's—Yet if it hurts you, leave me: I have misled you often.

Bev. We have misled each other—But come! Fortune is fickle, and may be tired with plaguing us—There let us rest our hopes.

Stu. Yet think a little—

Bev. I cannot—thinking but distracts me.

When desperation leads all thoughts are vain;
Reason would lose, what rashness may obtain.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs. BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Char. 'Twas all a scheme, a mean one; unworthy of my brother.

Mrs. *Bev.* No, I am sure it was not—Stukely is honest too; I know he is—This madness has undone them both.

Char. My brother irrecoverably—You are too spiritless a wife—A mournful tale, mixt with a few kind words, will steal away your soul. The world is too subtle for such goodness. Had I been by, he should have ask'd your life sooner than those jewels.

Mrs. *Bev.* He should have had it, then. [*warmly.*] I live but to oblige him. She who can love, and is beloved like me, will do as much. Men have done more for mistresses, and women for a base deluder. And shall a wife do less? your chidings hurt me, Charlotte.

Char. And come too late; they might have saved you else. How could he use you so?

Mrs. *Bev.* 'Twas friendship did it. His heart was breaking for a friend.

Char. The friend that has betray'd him.

Mrs. *Bev.* Pr'ythee do not think so.

Char. To-morrow he accounts with me.

Mrs. *Bev.* And fairly——I will not doubt it.

Char. Unless a friend has wanted——I have no patience —Sister! Sister! we are bound to curse this friend.

Mrs. *Bev.* My Beverly speaks nobly of him.

Char. And Lewson truly—But I displease you with this talk.—To-morrow will instruct us.

Mrs. *Bev.* Stay till it comes then—I would not think so hardly.

Char. Nor I, but from conviction—Yet we have hope of better days. My uncle is infirm, and of an age that threatens hourly—Or if he lives, you never have offended him; and for distresses so unmerited he will have pity.

Mrs. *Bev.* I know it, and am chearful, 'we have no 'more to lose; and for what is gone, if it brings prudence 'home, the purchase was well made.'

Char. My Lewson will be kind too. While he and I have life and means, you shall divide with us—And see, he's here!

Enter LEWSON.

We were just speaking of you.

Lew. 'Tis best to interrupt you then. Few characters will bear a scrutiny; and where the bad out-weighs the good, he is safest that is least talked of. What say you, madam? [*to Charlotte.*

Char. That I hate scandal, though a woman—therefore talk seldom of you.

Mrs. *Bev.* Or, with more truth, that, though a woman, she loves to praise—Therefore talks always of you. I'll leave you to decide it. [*Exit.*

Lew. How good and amiable! I came to talk in private with you; of matters that concern you.

'*Char.* What matters?

'*Lew.* First answer me sincerely to what I ask.

'*Char.* I will—But you alarm me.

'*Lew.* I am too grave, perhaps; but be assured of this, 'I have no news that troubles me, and therefore should not 'you.

'*Char.* I am easy then—Propose your question.'

Lew. 'Tis now a tedious twelve-month, since with an open and kind heart you said you loved me.

Char. So tedious, did you say?

Lew. And when in consequence of such sweet words, I press'd for marriage, you gave a voluntary promise that you would live for me.

Char. You think me changed, then? [*angrily.*

Lew. I did not say so. A thousand times I have press'd for the performance of this promise: but private cares, a brother's and a sister's ruin, were reasons for delaying it.

Char. I had no other reasons.—Where will this end?

Lew. It shall end presently.

Char. Go on, sir.

Lew. A promise, such as this, given freely, not extorted, the world thinks binding; but I think otherwise.

Char. And would release me from it?

Lew. You are too impatient, madam.

Char. Cool, Sir—quite cool—pray go on.

Lew. Time and a near acquaintance with my faults may have brought change—if it be so; or for a moment, if you have wish'd this promise were unmade, here I acquit you of it—this is my question then; and with such plainness as I ask it, I shall entreat an answer. Have you repented of this promise?

Char. Stay, Sir. The man that can suspect me shall find me changed——why am I doubted?

Lew. My doubts are of myself. I have my faults, and you have observation. If from my temper, my words or actions, you have conceived a thought against me, or even a wish for separation, all that has pass'd is nothing.

Char. You startle me—but tell me—I must be answer'd first. Is it from honour you speak this? Or do you wish me changed?

Lew. Heaven knows I do not. Life and my Charlotte are so connected, that to lose one, were loss of both. Yet for a promise, though given in love, and meant for binding; if time, or accident, or reason should change opinion—with me that promise has no force.

Char. Why, now I'll answer you. Your doubts are prophecies——I am really changed.

Lew. Indeed!

Char. I could torment you now, as you have me; but it is not my nature——that I am changed, I own: for what at first was inclination, is now grown reason in me; and from that reason, had I the world! nay, were I poorer than the poorest, and you too wanting bread, with but a hovel to invite me to—I would be yours, and happy.

Lew. My kindest Charlotte! [*taking her hand*] Thanks are too poor for this——and words too weak! but if we love so, why should our union be delay'd?

Char. For happier times. The present are too wretched.

Lew. I may have reasons that press it now.

Char. What reasons?

Lew. The strongest reasons; unanswerable ones.

Char. Be quick and name them.

' *Lew.* No, madam; I am bound in honour to make con-
' ditions first——I am bound by inclination too. This
' sweet profusion of kind words pains while it pleases. I
' dread the losing you.

' *Char.* Astonishment! What mean you!'

Lew. First promise, that to-morrow, or the next day, you will be mine for ever.

Char. I do——though misery should succeed.

Lew. Thus then I seize you! And with you every joy on this side heaven!

Char. And thus I seal my promise. [*embracing him*] Now, Sir, your secret?

Lew. Your fortune's lost.

Char. My fortune lost!——I'll study to be humble then. But was my promise claim'd for this? How nobly generous! Where learnt you this sad news?

Lew. From Bates, Stukely's prime agent. I have obliged him, and he is grateful—He told it me in friendship, to warn me from my Charlotte.

Char. It was honest in him, and I will esteem him for it.

Lew. He knows much more than he has told.

Char. For me it is enough. And for your generous love, I thank you from my soul. If you'd oblige me more, give me a little time.

Lew. Why time? It robs us of our happiness.

Char. I have a task to learn first. The little pride this fortune gave me must be subdued. Once we were equal; and might have met obliging and obliged. But now it is otherwise; and for a life of obligations, I have not learnt to bear it.

Lew. Mine is that life. You are too noble.

Char. Leave me to think on it.

Lew. To-morrow then you'll fix my happiness?

'*Char.* All that I can, I will.

Lew. It must be so; we live but for each other. Keep what you know a secret; and when we meet to-morrow, more may be known.—Farewell. [*Exit.*

Char. My poor, poor sister! How would this wound her! But I'll conceal it, and speak comfort to her. [*Exit.*

SCENE *changes to a Room in the Gaming-House.*

Enter BEVERLEY *and* STUKELY.

Bev. Whither would you lead me? [*angrily.*

Stu. Where we may vent our curses.

Bev. Ay, on yourself, and those damn'd counsels that have destroy'd me. A thousand fiends were in that bosom, and all let loose to tempt me——I had resisted else.

Stu. Go on, sir——I have deserved this from you.

Bev. And curses everlasting——Time is too scanty for them——

Stu. What have I done?

Bev. What the arch-devil of old did—sooth'd with false hopes, for certain ruin.

Stu. Myself unhurt; nay, pleased at your destruction—So your words mean. Why; tell it to the world. I am too poor to find a friend in it.

Bev. A friend! what is he? I had a friend.

Stu. And have one still.

Bev. Ay; I'll tell you of this friend. He found me happiest of the happy. Fortune and honour crown'd me; and love and peace lived in my heart. One spark of folly lurked there; that too he found; and by deceitful breath blew it to flames that have consumed me. This friend were you to me.

Stu. A little more, perhaps—The friend who gave his all to save you; and not succeeding, chose ruin with you. But no matter, I have undone you, and am a villain.

Bev. No; I think not—The villains are within.

Stu. What villains?

Bev. Dawson and the rest——We have been dupes to sharpers.

Stu. How know you this? I have had doubts as well as you; yet still as fortune changed I blushed at my own thoughts—But you have proofs, perhaps.

Bev. Ay, damn'd ones. Repeated losses—night after night, and no reverse——Chance has no hand in this.

Stu. I think more charitably; yet I am peevish in my nature, and apt to doubt—The world speaks fairly of this

Dawson, so does it of the rest. We have watch'd them closely too. But it is a right usurp'd by losers, to think the winners knaves—We'll have more manhood in us.

Bev. I know not what to think. This night has stung me to the quick—Blasted my reputation too—I have bound my honour to these vipers; play'd meanly upon credit, 'till I tired them; and now they shun me to rifle one another. What is to be done?

Stu. Nothing. My counsels have been fatal.

Bev. By heaven I'll not survive this shame——Traitor! 'tis you have brought it on me. [*taking hold of him.*] Shew me the means to save me, or I'll commit a murder here, and next upon myself.

Stu. Why do it then, and rid me of ingratitude.

Bev. Pr'ythee forgive this language—I speak I know not what——Rage and despair are in my heart, and hurry me to madness. My home is horror to me—I'll not return to it. Speak quickly; tell me, if in this wreck of fortune, one hope remains? Name it, and be my oracle.

Stu. To vent your curses on——You have bestow'd them liberally. Take your own counsel: and should a desperate hope present itself, it will suit your desperate fortune. I'll not advise you.

Bev. What hope? By heaven I'll catch at it, however desperate. I am so sunk in misery, it cannot lay me lower.

Stu. You have an uncle.

Bev. Ay, what of him?

Stu. Old men live long by temperance; while their heirs starve on expectation.

Bev. What mean you?

Stu. That the reversion of his estate is your's, and will bring money to pay debts with—Nay more, it may retrieve what's past.

Bev. Or leave my child a beggar.

Stu. And what's his father? A dishonourable one; engaged for sums he cannot pay—That should be thought of.

Bev. It is my shame—The poison that enflames me. Where shall we go? To whom? I am impatient 'till all is lost.

Stu. All may be your's again—Your man is Bates—He has large funds at his command, and will deal justly by you.

Bev. I am resolved—Tell 'em within we'll meet 'em presently; and with full purses, too—Come, follow me.

Stu. No. I'll have no hand in this; nor do I counsel it—Use your discretion, and act from that. You'll find me at my lodgings.

Bev. Succeed what will, this night I'll dare the worst.
'Tis loss of fear, to be completely curs'd. [*Exit.*

Stu. Why, lose it then for ever—Fear is the mind's worst evil; and 'tis a friendly office to drive it from the bosom—Thus far has fortune crown'd me—Yet Beverley is rich; rich in his wife's best treasure, her honour and affections. I would supplant him there too. ' But it is the curse of ' thinking minds to raise up difficulties. Fools only con- ' quer women. Fearless of dangers which they see not, ' they press on boldly, and by persisting, prosper. Yet ' may a tale of art do much'—Charlotte is sometimes absent. The seeds of jealousy are sown already. If I mistake not, they have taken root too. Now is the time to ripen them, and reap the harvest. The softest of her sex, if wrong'd in love, or thinking that she's wrong'd, becomes a tygress in revenge—I'll instantly to Beverley's—No matter for the danger—When beauty leads us on, 'tis indiscretion to reflect, and cowardice to doubt. [*Exit.*

SCENE *changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter Mrs. BEVERLEY *and* LUCY.

Mrs. *Bev.* Did Charlotte tell you any thing?

Lu. No, madam.

Mrs. *Bev.* She look'd confused, methought; said she had business with her Lewson; which, when I press'd to know, tears only were her answer.

Lu. She seem'd in haste, too.—Yet her return may bring you comfort.

Mrs. *Bev.* No, my kind girl; I was not born for it—But why do I distress thee? Thy symphathizing heart bleeds for the ills of others—What pity that thy mistress cannot reward thee! But there's a power above, that sees, and will remember all. ' Pr'ythee sooth me with the song thou sung'st ' last night. It suits this change of fortune; and there is a ' melancholy in it that pleases me.

'*Lu.* I fear it hurts you, madam—Your goodness too 'draws tears from me—But I'll dry them and obey you.

'SONG.

'When Damon languish'd at my feet,
'And I believ'd him true,
'The moments of delight how sweet!
'But ah! how swift they flew!
'The sunny hill, the flow'ry vale,
'The garden and the grove,
'Have echo'd to his ardent tale,
'And vows of endless love.

II.

'The conquest gain'd he left his prize,
'He left her to complain;
'To talk of joy with weeping eyes,
'And measure time by pain.
'But heav'n will take the mourner's part,
'In pity to despair;
'And the last sigh that rends the heart,
'Shall waft the spirit there.

'Mrs. *Bev.* I thank thee, Lucy—I thank heaven, too, my 'griefs are none of these. Yet Stukely deals in hints—He 'talks of rumours—I'll urge him to speak plainly'—Hark! there is some one entering.

Lu. Perhaps my master, madam. [*Exit.*

Mrs. *Bev.* Let him be well too, and I am satisfied. [*goes to the door and listens.*] No; it is another's voice; 'his 'had been music to me. Who is it, Lucy?'

Re-enter LUCY *with* STUKELY.

Lu. Mr. Stukely, madam. [*Exit.*

Stu. To meet you thus alone, madam, was what I wish'd. Unseasonable visits, when friendship warrants them, need no excuse—Therefore I make none.

Mrs. *Bev.* 'What mean you, sir? And where is your friend?

Stu. Men may have secrets, madam, which their best

friends are not admitted to. We parted in the morning, not soon to meet again.

Mrs. *Bev.* You mean to leave us then? To leave your country, too? I am no stranger to your reasons, and pity your misfortunes.

Stu. Your pity has undone you. Could Beverley do this? That letter was a false one; a mean contrivance to rob you of your jewels—I wrote it not.

Mrs. *Bev.* Impossible! whence came it then?

Stu. Wrong'd as I am, madam, I must speak plainly—

Mrs. *Bev.* Do so, and ease me. Your hints have troubled me. Reports, you say, are stirring——Reports of whom? You wish'd me not to credit 'em. What, sir, are these reports?

Stu. I thought 'em slander, madam; and caution'd you in friendship; lest from officious tongues the tale had reach'd you with double aggravation.

Mrs. *Bev.* Proceed, sir.

Stu. It is a debt due to my fame, due to an injured wife, too——We both are injured.

Mrs. *Bev.* How injured? and who has injured us?

Stu. My friend, your husband.

Mrs. *Bev.* You would resent for both then? But know, sir, my injuries are my own, and do not need a champion.

Stu. Be not too hasty, madam. I come not in resentment, but for acquittance—You thought me poor; and to the feign'd distresses of a friend gave up your jewels.

Mrs. *Bev.* I gave 'em to a husband.

Stu. Who gave 'em to a——

Mrs. *Bev.* What? Whom did he give 'em to?

Stu. A mistress.

Mrs. *Bev.* No; on my life he did not.

Stu. Himself confess'd it, with curses on her avarice.

Mrs. *Bev.* I'll not believe it——He has no mistress——or if he has, why is it told to me?

Stu. To guard you against insults. He told me, that to move you to compliance, he forged that letter; pretending I was ruin'd; ruin'd by him, too. The fraud succeeded; and what a trusting wife bestow'd in pity, was lavish'd on a wanton.

Mrs. *Bev.* Then I am lost, indeed; and my afflictions are too powerful for me—His follies I have borne without upbraiding, and saw the approach of poverty without a

tear—My affections, my strong affections supported me through every trial.

Stu. Be patient, madam.

Mrs. *Bev.* Patient! The barbarous, ungrateful man! And does he think that the tenderness of my heart is his best security for wounding it? But he shall find that injuries such as these, can arm my weakness for vengeance and redress.

Stu. Ha! then I may succeed—— [*Aside.* Redress is in your power.

Mrs. *Bev.* What redress?

Stu. Forgive me, madam, if in my zeal to serve you, I hazard your displeasure.——Think of your wretched state. Already want surrounds you? Is it in patience to bear that? To see your helpless little one robb'd of his birth-right? A sister, too, with unavailing tears, lamenting her lost fortune? No comfort left you, but ineffectual pity from the few, out-weigh'd by insults from the many?

Mrs. *Bev.* Am I so lost a creature? Well, sir, my redress?

Stu. To be resolved is to secure it. The marriage vow, once violated, is in the sight of heaven dissolved—Start not, but hear me! 'Tis now the summer of your youth; Time has not cropt the roses from your cheek, tho' sorrow long has wash'd 'em—Then use your beauty wisely, and freed by injuries, fly from the cruellest of men, for shelter with the kindest.

Mrs. *Bev.* And who is he?

Stu. A friend to the unfortunate; a bold one, too; who, while the storm is bursting on your brow, and lightning flashing from your eyes, dares tell you that he loves you.

Mrs. *Bev.* Would that these eyes had heaven's own lightning! that with a look, thus I might blast thee! Am I then fallen so low? Has poverty so humbled me, that I should listen to a hellish offer, and sell my soul for bread? O villain! villain!—But now I know thee, and thank thee for the knowledge.

Stu. If you are wise, you shall have cause to thank me.

Mrs. *Bev.* An injured husband, too, shall thank thee.

Stu. Yet know, proud woman, I have a heart as stubborn as your own; as haughty and imperious; and as it loves, so can it hate.

Mrs. *Bev.* Mean despicable villain! I scorn thee and

thy threats. Was it for this that Beverley was false? That his too credulous wife should in despair and vengeance give up her honour to a wretch? But he shall know it, and vengeance shall be his.

Stu. Why send him for defiance then. Tell him I love his wife; but that a worthless husband forbids our union. I'll make a widow of you, and court you honourably.

Mrs. *Bev.* O coward! coward! thy soul will shrink at him. Yet in the thought of what may happen, I feel a woman's fears. Keep thy own secret, and begone. 'Who's 'there?

'*Enter* LUCY.

'Your absence, sir, would please me.'

Stu. I'll not offend you, madam.

[*Exit Stukely* '*with Lucy.*'

Mrs. *Bev.* Why opens not the earth to swallow such a monster? Be conscience then his punisher, 'till heaven in mercy gives him penitence, or dooms him in his justice.

'*Re-enter* LUCY.

'Come to my chamber, Lucy; I have a tale to tell thee 'shall make thee weep for thy poor mistress.

'Yet heaven the guiltless sufferer regards,
'And whom it most afflicts, it most rewards.' [*Exeunt.*

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

'SCENE *Beverley's Lodgings.*

'*Enter* MRS. BEVERLEY, CHARLOTTE, *and* LEWSON.

'*Char.* THE smooth-tongued hypocrite!

'*Lew.* But we have found him, and will requite him—'Be chearful, madam; [*to Mrs. Beverley,*] and for the 'insults of this ruffian you shall have ample retribution.

'Mrs. *Bev.* But not by violence—Remember you have 'sworn it; I had been silent else.

'*Lew.* You need not doubt me; I shall be cool as 'patience.

'Mrs. *Bev.* See him to-morrow then.

'*Lew.* And why not now? By heaven the veriest worm 'that crawls is made of braver spirit than this Stukely—'Yet for my promise, I'll deal gently with him—I mean to 'watch his looks—From those, and from his answers to my 'charge, much may be learnt. Next I'll to Bates, and 'sift him to the bottom. If I fail there, the gang is 'numerous, and for a bribe will each betray the other—'Good night; I'll lose no time. [*Exit.*

'Mrs. *Bev.* These boisterous spirits! how they wound 'me! But reasoning is in vain. Come, Charlotte; we'll 'to our usual watch. The night grows late.

'*Char.* I am fearful of events; yet pleased——To-'morrow may relieve us. [*Going.*

'*Enter* JARVIS.

'*Char.* How now, good Jarvis?

'*Jar.* I have heard ill news, madam.

'Mrs. *Bev.* What news? Speak quickly.

'*Jar.* Men are not what they seem. I fear me Mr. 'Stukely is dishonest.

'*Char.* We know it, Jarvis. But what's your news?

'*Jar.* That there's an action against my master, at his 'friend's suit.

'Mrs. *Bev.* O villain! villain! 'twas this he threaten'd 'then. Run to that den of robbers, Wilson's—Your

'master may be there. Entreat him home, good Jarvis. 'Say I have business with him—But tell him not of Stukely '—It may provoke him to revenge—Haste! haste! good 'Jarvis. [*Exit Jarvis.*

'*Char.* This minister of hell! O I could tear him 'piece-meal!——

'Mrs. *Bev.* I am sick of such a world—Yet heaven is 'just; and in its own good time, will hurl destruction on 'such monsters. [*Exeunt.*'

SCENE *changes to Stukely's Lodgings.*

Enter STUKELY *and* BATES *meeting.*

Bates. Where have you been?

Stu. Fooling my time away——Playing my tricks, like a tame monkey, to entertain a woman—No matter where—I have been vext and disappointed. Tell me of Beverley—How bore he his last shock?

Bat. Like one (so Dawson says) whose senses had been numb'd with misery. When all was lost, he fixt his eyes upon the ground and stood some time, with folded arms, stupid and motionless. Then snatching his sword that hung against the wainscot, he sat him down; and with a look of fixt attention, drew figures on the floor—At last he started up, looked wild, and trembled: and like a woman, seized with her sex's fits, laughed out aloud, while the tears trickled down his face—so left the room.

Stu. Why, this was madness.

Bat. The madness of despair.

Stu. We must confine him then. A prison would do well [*a knocking at the door.*] Hark! that knocking may be his. Go that way down: [*Exit Bates.*] Who's there?

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. An enemy—an open and avowed one.

Stu. Why am I thus broke in upon? This house is mine, sir; and should protect me from insult and ill-manners.

Lew. Guilt has no place of sanctuary; wherever found, 'tis virtue's lawful game. The fox's hold, and tyger's den are no security against the hunter.

Stu. Your business, sir?

Lew. To tell you that I know you—Why this confusion? That look of guilt and terror?—Is Beverley awake? Or has his wife told tales? The man that dares like you, should have a soul to justify his deeds and courage to confront accusers: not with a coward's fear to shrink beneath reproof.

Stu. Who waits there? [*Aloud, and in confusion.*

Lew. By heaven he dies that interrupts us. [*shutting the door.*] You should have weigh'd your strength, sir; and then, instead of climbing to high fortune, the world had marked you for what you are, a little paltry villain.

Stu. You think I fear you.

Lew. I know you fear me. This is to prove it. [*pulls him by the sleeve.*] You wanted privacy! A lady's presence took up your attention! Now we are alone, sir. Why, what a wretch! [*flings Stukely from him.*] The vilest insect in creation will turn when trampled on; yet has this thing undone a man—by cunning and mean arts undone him. But we have found you, sir; traced you thro' all your labyrinths. If you would save yourself, fall to confession. No mercy will be shewn else.

Stu. First prove me what you think me——'Till then your threatenings are in vain—And for this insult, vengeance may yet be mine.

Lew. Infamous coward! why take it now then—[*draws, and Stukely retires.*] Alas! I pity thee—Yet that a wretch like this should overcome a Beverley! it fills me with astonishment!——A wretch, so mean of soul, that even desperation cannot animate him to look upon an enemy—You should not thus have soar'd, sir, unless, like others of your black profession, you had a sword to keep the fools in awe, your villainy has ruin'd.

Stu. Villainy! 'Twere best to curb this licence of your tongue; for know, sir, while there are laws, this outrage on my reputation will not be borne with.

Lew. Laws! darest thou seek shelter from the laws? Those laws, which thou and thy infernal crew live in the constant violation of? Talk'st thou of reputation, too? when under friendship's sacred name, thou hast betray'd, robb'd, and destroy'd?

Stu. Ay, rail at gaming; 'tis a rich topic, and affords noble declamation——Go, preach against it in the city

You'll find a congregation in every tavern. If they should laugh at you, fly to my lord, and sermonize it there. He'll thank you and reform.

Lew. And will example sanctify a vice? No, wretch; the custom of my lord, or of the cit that apes him, cannot excuse a breach of law, or make the gamester's calling reputable.

Stu. Rail on, I say—But is this zeal for beggar'd Beverley? Is it for him that I am treated thus? No; he and his wife might both have groan'd in prison, had but the sister's fortune escaped the wreck, to have rewarded the disinterested love of honest Mr. Lewson.

Lew. How I detest thee for the thought! But thou art lost to every human feeling. Yet let me tell thee, and may it wring thy heart! that tho' my friend is ruin'd by thy snares, thou hast unknowingly been kind to me.

Stu. Have I? It was indeed unknowing'y.

Lew. Thou hast assisted me in love; given me the merit that I wanted; since but for thee, my Charlotte had not known 'twas her dear self I sigh'd for, and not her fortune.

Stu. Thank me, and take her then.

Lew. And as a brother to poor Beverley, I will pursue the robber that has stript him, and snatch him from his gripe.

Stu. Then know, imprudent man, he is within my gripe; and should my friendship for him be slander'd once again, the hand that has supplied him, shall fall and crush him.

Lew. Why, now there's a spirit in thee! This is indeed to be a villain! But I shall reach thee yet, fly where thou wilt, my vengeance shall pursue thee—And Beverley shall yet be saved, be saved from thee, thou monster; nor owe his rescue to his wife's dishonour. [*Exit.*

Stu. [*pausing.*] Then ruin has enclosed me. Curse on my coward heart! I would be bravely villainous; but it is my nature to shrink at danger, and he has found me. Yet fear brings caution, and that security—More mischief must be done to hide the past—Look to yourself officious Lewson—there may be danger stirring—How now, Bates?

Enter BATES.

Bat. What is the matter? 'Twas Lewson and not Beverley that left you—I heard him loud——You seem alarm'd too.

Stu. Ay, and with reason—We are discover'd.

Bat. I fear'd as much, and therefore caution'd you—But you were peremptory.

Stu. Thus fools talk ever; spending their idle breath on what is past, and trembling at the future. We must be active. Beverley at worst, is but suspicious; but Lewson's genius, and his hate to me, will lay all open. Means must be found to stop him.

Bat. What means?

Stu. Dispatch him——Nay, start not——Desperate occasions call for desperate deeds——We live but by his death.

Bat. You cannot mean it?

Stu. I do, by heaven.

Bat. Good night, then. [*Going.*

Stu. Stay. I must be heard, then answer'd. Perhaps the motion was too sudden; and human weakness starts at murder, tho' strong necessity compels it. I have thought long of this; and my first feelings were like your's; a foolish conscience awed me, which soon I conquer'd. The man that would undo me, nature cries out, undo. Brutes know their foes by instinct; and where superior force is given, they use it for destruction. Shall man do less? Lewson pursues us to our ruin; and shall we, with the means to crush him, fly from our hunter, or turn and tear him? 'Tis folly even to hesitate.

Bat. He has obliged me, and I dare not.

Stu. Why, live to shame then, to beggary and punishment. You would be privy to the deed, yet want the soul to act it. Nay more; had my designs been levell'd at his fortune, you had stept in the foremost——And what is life without its comforts? Those you would rob him of; and by a lingering death, add cruelty to murder. Henceforth adieu to half-made villains—There's danger in 'em. What you have got is your's; keep it, and hide with it——I'll deal my future bounty to those that merit it?

Bat. What's the reward?

Stu. Equal division of our gains. I swear it, and will be just.

Bat. Think of the means then.

Stu. He is gone to Beverley's—Wait for him in the street—'Tis a dark night, and fit for mischief. A dagger would be useful.

Bat. 'He sleeps' no more.

Stu. Consider the reward! When the deed's done, I have farther business with you. Send Dawson to me.

Bat. Think it already done—and so farewel. [*Exit.*

Stu. Why, farewel Lewson then; and farewel to my fears—This night secures me. I'll wait the event within. [*Exit.*

SCENE *changes to the Street. Stage darkened.*

Enter BEVERLEY.

Bev. How like an out-cast do I wander? loaded with every curse, that drives the soul to desperation——The midnight robber, as he walks his rounds, sees by the glimmering lamp my frantic looks, and dreads to meet me. ——Whither am I going?——My home lies there; all that is dear on earth it holds too; yet are the gates of death more welcome to me——I'll enter it no more—— Who passes there? 'Tis Lewson—He meets me in a gloomy hour; and memory tells me he has been meddling with my fame.

Enter LEWSON.

Lew. Beverley! Well met. I have been busy in your affairs.

Bev. So I have heard, Sir; and now must thank you as I ought.

Lew. To morrow I may deserve your thanks. Late as it is, I go to Bates. Discoveries are making that an arch villain trembles at.

Bev. Discoveries are made, Sir, that you shall tremble at. Where is this boasted spirit? this high demeanour, that was to call me to account; You say I have wrong'd my sister—Now say as much. But first be ready for defence, as I am for resentment. [*draws.*

Lew. What mean you? I understand you not.

Bev. The coward's stale acquittance. Who, when he spreads foul calumny abroad, and dreads just vengeance on him, cries out, What mean you, I understand you not.

Lew. Coward and calumny! Whence are those words? But I forgive, and pity you.

Bev. Your pity had been kinder to my fame. But you have traduced it; told a vile story to the public ear, that I have wrong'd my sister.

Lew. 'Tis false. Shew me the man that dares accuse me.

Bev. I thought you brave, and of a soul superior to low malice; but I have found you, and will have vengeance. This is no place for argument.

Lew. Nor shall it be for violence. Imprudent man! who in revenge for fancied injuries, would pierce the heart that loves him. But honest friendship acts from itself, unmoved by slander, ' or ingratitude. The life you thirst for ' shall be employ'd to serve you.

' *Bev.* 'Tis thus you would compound then—First do a ' wrong beyond forgiveness, and to redress it, load me with ' kindnesses unsolicited. I'll not receive it. Your zeal is ' troublesome.

' *Lew.* No matter: it shall be useful.

' *Bev.* It will not be accepted.

' *Lew.* It must.' You know me not.

Bev. Yes; for the slanderer of my fame. Who under shew of friendship, arraigns me of injustice. Buzzing in every ear foul breach of trust, and family dishonour.

Lew. Have I done this? Who told you so?

Bev. The world——'Tis talked of every where. It pleased you to add threats, too. You were to call me to account——Why, do it now then: I shall be proud of such an arbiter.

Lew. Put up your sword, and know me better. I never injured you. The base suggestion comes from Stukely; I see him and his aims.

Bev. What aims; I'll not conceal it; 'twas Stukely that accused you.

Lew. To rid him of an enemy——Perhaps of two—— He fears discovery, and frames a tale of falsehood, to ground revenge and murder on.

Bev. I must have proof of this.

Lew. Wait till to-morrow then.

Bev. I will.

Lew. Good night——I go to serve you——Forget what's past as I do; and cheer your family with smiles. To-morrow may confirm 'em, and make all happy. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*Pausing.*] How vile, and how absurd is man! his boasted honour is but another name for pride: which easier bears the consciousness of guilt, than the world's just reproofs. But 'tis the fashion of the times; and in defence of falsehood and false honour, men die martyrs. I knew not that my nature was so bad. [*Stands musing.*

Enter BATES *and* JARVIS.

Jar. This way the noise was——and yonder is my poor master.

Bat. I heard him at high words with Lewson. The cause I know not.

Jar. I heard him too—Misfortunes vex him.

Bat. Go to him, and lead him home——But he comes this way——I'll not be seen by him. [*Exit.*

Bev. [*starting.*] What fellow is that? [*seeing Jarvis*] Art thou a murderer, friend? Come lead the way; I have a hand as mischievous as thine: a heart as desperate too——Jarvis! To bed, old man, the cold will chill thee.

Jar. Why are you wandering at this late hour?—Your sword drawn too!—For heaven's sake sheath it, Sir——the sight distracts me.

Bev. Whose voice was that? [*wildly.*

Jar. 'Twas mine, Sir. Let me intreat you to give the sword to me.

Bev. Ay, take it—quickly take it—Perhaps I am not so cursed, but heaven may have sent thee at this moment to snatch me from perdition.

Jar. Then I am blest.

Bev. Continue so, and leave me, my sorrows are contagious. No one is blest that's near me.

Jar. I came to seek you, Sir.

Bev. And now thou hast found me, leave me—my thoughts are wild and will not be disturb'd.

Jar. Such thoughts are best disturb'd.

'*Bev.* I tell thee that they will not——who sent thee 'thither?

'*Jar.* My weeping mistress.

'*Bev.* Am I so meek a husband then? that a command- 'ing wife prescribes my hours, and sends to chide me for 'my absence?——Tell her, I'll not return.

'*Jar.* Those words would kill her.

'*Bev.* Kill her! Would they not be kind then? But she 'shall live to curse me—I have deserved it of her. Does 'she not hate me, Jarvis?

'*Jar.*' Alas, Sir! Forget your griefs, and let me lead you to her. The streets are dangerous.

Bev. Be wise, and leave me then. The night's black horrors are suited to my thoughts——these stones shall be my resting-place. [*lies down.*] Here shall my soul brood o'er its miseries; 'till with the fiends of hell, and guilty of the earth, I start and tremble at the morning's light.

Jar. 'For pity's sake, Sir!—Upon my knees I beg you to 'quit this place, and these sad thoughts.' Let patience, not despair possess you——rise, I beseech you——there's not a moment of your absence, that my poor mistress does not groan for.

Bev. Have I undone her, and is she still so kind? [*starting up*] It is too much——my brain can't hold it——O, Jarvis! how desperate is that wretch's state, which only death or madness can relieve.

Jar. Appease his mind, good heaven! and give him resignation! Alas, Sir, could Beings in the other world perceive the events of this, how would your parents blessed spirits grieve for you, even in heaven—let me conjure you by their honour'd memories; by the sweet innocence of your yet helpless child, and by the ceaseless sorrows of my poor mistress, to rouze your manhood, and struggle with these griefs.

Bev. Thou virtuous, good old man! thy tears and thy entreaties have reach'd my heart, through all its miseries. 'O! had I listen'd to thy honest warnings, no earthly 'blessing had been wanting to me!—I was so happy, that 'even a wish for more than I possess'd, was arrogant pre'sumption But I have warr'd against the power that bless'd 'me, and now am sentenced to the hell I merit.

'*Jar.* Be but resign'd, Sir, and happiness may yet be 'yours.

'*Bev.* Prithee be honest, and do not flatter misery.'

Jar. 'I do not, Sir'——Hark! I hear voices——come this way; we may reach home unnoticed.

Bev. 'Well, lead me then'—Unnoticed did'st thou say?

Alas! I dread no looks but of those wretches I have made at home. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to Stukely's.*

Enter STUKELY *and* DAWSON.

Stu. Come hither, Dawson. My limbs are on the rack, and my soul shivers in me, 'till this night's business be complete. Tell me thy thoughts: Is Bates determined, or does he waver?

Daw. At first he seem'd irresolute; wish'd the employment had been mine; and mutter'd curses on his coward hand, that trembled at the deed.

Stu. And did he leave you so?

Daw. No. We walk'd together; and shelter'd by the darkness, saw Beverley and Lewson in warm debate. But soon they cool'd; and then I left 'em to hasten hither; but not 'till 'twas resolved Lewson should die.

Stu. Thy words have given me life——that quarrel, too, was fortunate; for if my hopes deceive me not, it promises a grave to Beverley.

Daw. You misconceive me. Lewson and he were friends.

Stu. But my prolific brain shall make 'em enemies. If Lewson falls, he falls by Beverley. An upright jury shall decree it. Ask me no question, but do as I direct. This writ [*takes out a pocket book*] for some days past, I have treasured here, 'till a convenient time call'd for its use. That time is come. Take it, and give it to an officer. It must be served this instant. [*gives a paper.*

Daw. On Beverley?

Stu. Look at it. 'Tis for the sums that I have lent him.

Daw. Must he to prison then?

Stu. I ask'd obedience; not replies. This night a jail must be his lodging. 'Tis probable he's not gone home yet. Wait at his door, and see it executed.

Daw. Upon a beggar? He has no means of payment.

Stu. Dull and insensible! If Lewson dies, who was it kill'd him? Why, he that was seen quarrelling with him; and I that knew of Beverley's intents, arrested him in friendship

——a little late, perhaps; but 'twas a virtuous act, and men will thank me for it. Now, Sir, you understand me?

Daw. Most perfectly——and will about it.

Stu. Haste then; and when 'tis done, come back and tell me.

Daw. 'Till then farewell. [*Exit.*

Stu. Now tell thy tale, fond wife! And Lewson, if again thou canst insult me, 'I'll kneel and own thee for my master.'

Not avarice now, but vengeance fires my breast,
And one short hour must make me curst or blest.
[*Exit.*

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE *continues.*

Enter STUKELY, BATES, *and* DAWSON.

Bat. POOR Lewson!——but I told you enough last night——the thought of him is horrible to me.

Stu. In the street, did you say? And no one near him?

Bat. By his own door; he was leading me to his house. I pretended business with him, and stabb'd him to the heart, while he was reaching at the bell.

Stu. And did he fall so suddenly?

Bat. The repetition pleases you, I see. I told you, he fell without a groan.

Stu. What heard you of him this morning?

Bat. That the watch found him in their rounds, and alarm'd the servants. I mingled with the crowd just

now, and saw him dead in his own house.——The sight terrified me.

Stu. Away with terrors, 'till his ghost rise and accuse us —We have no living enemy to fear—unless 'tis Beverley; and him we have lodged safe in prison.

Bat. Must he be murder'd too?

Stu. No; I have a scheme to make the law his murderer —At what hour did Lewson fall?

Bat. The clock struck twelve as I turn'd to leave him. 'Twas a melancholy bell, I thought tolling for his death.

Stu. The time was lucky for us——Beverley was arrested at one, you say? [*to Dawson.*

Daw. Exactly.

Stu. Good. We'll talk of this presently——The women were with him, I think?

Daw. And old Jarvis. I would have told you of 'em last night, but your thoughts were too busy. 'Tis well you have a heart of stone, the tale would melt it else.

Stu. Out with it then.

Daw. I traced him to his lodgings; and pretending pity for his misfortunes, kept the door open, while the officers seized him. 'Twas a damn'd deed——but no matter——I follow'd my instructions.

Stu. And what said he?

Daw. He upbraided me with treachery; call'd you a villain; acknowledged the sums you had lent him, and submitted to his fortune.

Stu. And the women——

Daw. For a few minutes astonishment kept 'em silent ——They look'd wildly at one another, while the tears stream'd down their cheeks. But rage and fury soon gave 'em words; and then, in the very bitterness of despair, they cursed me and the monster that had employ'd me.

Stu. And you bore it with philosophy?

Daw. 'Till the scene changed, and then I melted. I order'd the officers to take away their prisoner. The women shriek'd, and would have followed him; but we forbade 'em. 'Twas then they fell upon their knees,, the wife fainting, the sister raving, and both with all the eloquence of misery endeavouring to soften us. I never felt compassion 'till that moment; and had the officers been moved like me, we had left the business undone, and fled

with curses on ourselves. But their hearts were steel'd by custom. The tears of beauty and the pangs of affection were beneath their pity. They tore him from their arms, and lodged him in prison, with only Jarvis to comfort him.

Stu. There let him lie, 'till we have farther business with him——' And for you, Sir, let me hear no more of your ' compassion——A fellow nursed in villainy, and employ'd ' from childhood in the business of hell, should have no ' dealings with compassion.

' *Daw.* Say you so, Sir?—You should have named the ' devil that tempted me——

' *Stu.* 'Tis false. I found you a villain, and therefore ' employ'd you——but no more of this——We have em- ' bark'd too far in mischief to recede. Lewson is dead, and ' we are all principals in his murder. Think of that—— ' There's time enough for pity when ourselves are out of ' danger——Beverley still lives, tho' in a jail——His ruin ' will set heavy on him; and discoveries may be made to ' undo us all. Something must be done, and speedily—You ' saw him quarrelling with Lewson in the street last night. ' [*To Bates.*

' *Bat.* I did; his steward, Jarvis, saw him too.

' *Stu.* And shall attest it. Here's matter to work upon ' ——An unwilling evidence carries weight with him. Some- ' thing of my design I have hinted t'you before——Beverley ' must be the author of this murder; and we the parties to ' convict him'——But how to proceed will require time and thought——Come along with me; the room within is fitted for privacy—But no compassion, Sir——[*to Dawson.*] We want leisure for't——This way. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE *changes to Beverley's Lodgings.*

Enter MRS. BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs. *Bev.* No news of Lewson yet?

Char. None. He went out early, and knows not what has happen'd.

Mrs. *Bev.* The clock strikes eight——I'll wait no longer.

Char. Stay but 'till Jarvis comes. He has sent twice to stop us 'till we see him.

Mrs. Bev. 'I have no life in this separation'—O! What a night was last night! I would not pass another such to purchase worlds by it——my poor Beverley too? What must he have felt! The very thought distracts me——to have him torn at midnight from me!——A loathsome prison his habitation! A cold damp room his lodging! The bleak winds perhaps blowing upon his pillow! No fond wife to lull him to his rest! and no reflections but to wound and tear him!——'Tis too horrible—I wanted love for him, or they had not forced him from me. They should have parted soul and body first—I was too tame.

Char. You must not talk so. All that we could we did; and Jarvis did the rest—the faithful creature will give him comfort. 'Why does he delay coming!

'*Mrs. Bev.* And there's another fear. His poor master 'may be claiming the last kind office from him——his heart 'perhaps is breaking.

'*Char.*' See where he comes——his looks are cheerful too.

Enter JARVIS.

Mrs. Bev. Are tears then cheerful? Alas, he weeps! Speak to him, Charlotte——I have no tongue to ask him questions.

Char. How does your master, Jarvis?

Jar. I am old and foolish, madam; and tears will come before my words——but don't you weep; [*to Mrs. Bev.*] I have a tale of joy for you.

Mrs. Bev. 'What tale?'—Say but he's well, and I have joy enough.

Jar. 'His mind too shall be well'—all shall be well—I have news for him that shall make his poor heart bound again—fie upon old age—how childish it makes me! I have a tale of joy for you, and my tears drown it.

'*Char.* Shed 'em in showers then, and make haste to tell 'it.'

Mrs. Bev. What is it, Jarvis?

Jar. 'Yet why should I rejoice when a good man dies? Your uncle, madam, died yesterday.

Mrs. Bev. My uncle!——O heavens!

Char. How heard you of his death?

Jar. His steward came express, madam—I met him in the street, enquiring for your lodgings——I should not rejoice perhaps—but he was old, and my poor master a prisoner——now he shall live again—O 'tis a brave fortune! 'and 'twas death to me to see him a prisoner.'

Char. Where left you the steward?

Jar. I would not bring him hither, to be a witness of your distresses; and besides, I wanted once before I die, to be the messenger of joy t'you. 'My good master will be a 'man again.

'Mrs. *Bev.* Haste, haste then; and let us fly to him!—'We are delaying our own happiness.

'*Jar.* I had forgot a coach, madam, and Lucy has order'd 'one.

'Mrs. *Bev.* Where was the need of that? The news has 'given me wings.'

Char. I have no joy, 'till my poor brother shares it with me. How did he pass the night, Jarvis?

Jar. 'Why now, madam, I can tell you.' Like a man dreaming of death and horrors. When they led him to his cell—'For 'twas a poor apartment for my master'—he flung himself upon a wretched bed, and lay speechless 'till daybreak. 'A sigh now and then, and a few tears that fol-'low'd those sighs, were all that told me he was alive.' I spoke to him, but he would not hear me; and when I persisted, he raised his hand at me, and knit his brow so——I thought he would have struck me.

'Mrs. *Bev.* O miserable! But what said he, Jarvis? Or 'was he silent all night?

'*Jar.* At day-break he started from the bed, and looking 'wildly at me, ask'd who I was,' I 'told him, and' bid him be of comfort—begone, old wretch, says he——'I have 'sworn never to know comfort'—my wife! my child! my sister! I have undone 'em all, and will know no comfort—then falling upon his knees, he imprecated curses upon himself.

Mrs. *Bev.* This is too horrible!—But you did not leave him so?

'*Char.* No, I am sure he did not.'

Jar. I had not the heart, madam. By degrees I brought him to himself. A shower of tears came to his relief; and then he call'd me his kindest friend, and begg'd forgiveness

of me like a child—'I was a child too, when he begg'd 'forgiveness of me.' My heart throbb'd so, I could not speak to him. He turn'd from me for a minute or two, and suppressing a few bitter sighs, enquired after his wretched family—'Wretched was his word, madam——ask'd how 'you bore the misery of last night——if you had goodness 'enough to see him in prison. And then begg'd me to 'hasten to you. I told him he must be more himself first—'he promised me he would; and bating a few sudden inter-'vals, he became composed and easy—and then I left him; 'but not without an attendant—a servant in the prison, 'whom I hired to wait upon him—'tis an hour since we 'parted—I was prevented in my haste to be the messenger 'of joy t'you.'

Mrs. *Bev.* What a tale is this?—But we have staid too long—'a coach is needless.

'*Char.* Hark! I hear one at the door.'

Jar. 'And Lucy comes to tell us'——We'll away this moment.

Mrs. *Bev.* To comfort him or die with him. [*Exeunt.*

'SCENE *changes to Stukely's Lodgings.*

'*Enter* STUKELY, BATES *and* DAWSON.

'*Stu.* Here's presumptive evidence at least—or if we 'want more, why we must swear more. But all unwillingly '—We gain credit by reluctance—I have told you how to 'proceed. Beverley must die——We hunt him in view 'now, and must not slacken in the chace. 'Tis either death 'for him, or shame and punishment for us. Think of that, 'and remember your instructions—You, Bates, must to the 'prison immediately. I would be there but a few minutes 'before you. And you, Dawson, must follow in a few 'minutes after. So here we divide—But answer me; are 'you resolved upon this business like men?

'*Bat.* Like villains rather—But you may depend upon 'us.

'*Stu.* Like what we are then——You make no answer, 'Dawson——Compassion, I suppose, has seized you.

'*Daw.* No; I have disclaim'd it—My answer is Bates's '——You may depend upon me.

'*Stu.* Consider the reward! Riches and security! I 'have sworn to divide with you to the last shilling——So 'here we separate 'till we meet in prison——Remember 'your instructions and be men. [*Exeunt.*'

SCENE *changes to a Prison.*

BEVERLEY *is discover'd sitting. After a short pause, he starts up, and comes forward.*

Bev. Why, there's an end then. I have judged deliberately, and the result is death. How the self-murderer's account may stand, I know not. But this I know—The load of hateful life oppresses me too much—The horrors of my soul are more than I can bear—[*offers to kneel*] Father of mercy!——I cannot pray——Despair has laid his iron hand upon me, and seal'd me for perdition—Conscience! Conscience! thy clamours are too loud———Here's that shall silence thee. [*takes a vial out of his pocket and looks at it.*] Thou art most friendly to the miserable. Come then, thou cordial for sick minds——Come to my heart. [*drinks*] O, that the grave would bury memory as well as body! For if the soul sees and feels the sufferings of those dear ones it leaves behind, the Everlasting has no vengeance to torment it deeper——I'll think no more on't——Reflection comes too late——Once there was a time for't——but now 'tis past.——Who's there?

Enter JARVIS.

Jar. One that hoped to see you with better looks——Why d'you turn so from me? I have brought comfort with me. And see who comes to give it welcome.

Bev. My wife and sister! Why, 'tis but one pang more then, and farewel world. [*Aside.*

Enter MRS. BEVERLEY *and* CHARLOTTE.

Mrs. *Bev.* Where is he? [*runs and embraces him*] O I have him! I have him! And now they shall never part us more—I have news, love, to make you happy for ever—But don't look coldly on me.

'*Char.* How is it, brother?

'Mrs. *Bev.* Alas! he hears us not——Speak to me, 'love.' I have no heart to see you thus.

Bev. 'Nor I to bear the sense of so much shame'—This is a sad place.

Mrs. *Bev.* We came to take you from it. To tell you the world goes well again. That Providence has seen our sorrows, and sent the means to help 'em—Your uncle died yesterday.

Bev. My uncle!—No, do not say so—O! I am sick at heart!

Mrs. *Bev.* Indeed!——I meant to bring you comfort.

Bev. Tell me he lives then——If you would bring me comfort, tell me he lives.

Mrs. *Bev.* And if I did——I have no power to raise the dead——He died yesterday.

Bev. And I am heir to him?

Jar. To his whole estate, Sir——But bear it patiently—pray bear it patiently.

Bev. Well, well—[*Pausing*] Why fame says I am rich then?

Mrs. *Bev.* And truly so—Why do you look so wildly?

Bev. Do I? The news was unexpected. But has he left me all?

Jar. All, all, Sir—He could not leave it from you.

Bev. I am sorry for it.

'*Char.* Sorry! Why sorry?

'*Bev.* Your uncle's dead, Charlotte.

'*Char.* Peace be with his soul then—Is it so terrible that 'an old man should die?

'*Bev.* He should have been immortal.'

Mrs. *Bev.* 'Heaven knows I wish'd not for his death. 'Twas the will of Providence that he should die'—Why are you disturb'd so?

Bev. Has death no terrors in it?

Mrs. *Bev.* Not an old man's death. Yet if it troubles you, I wish him living.

Bev. And I, with all my heart.

'*Char.* Why, what's the matter?

'*Bev.* Nothing—How heard you of his death?

'Mrs. *Bev.* his steward came express. Would I had 'never known it!

'*Bev.* Or had heard it one day sooner'—For I have a tale to tell, shall turn you into stone; or if the power of speech remain, you shall kneel down and curse me.

Mrs. *Bev.* Alas! What tale is this? And why are we to curse you—I'll bless you for ever.

Bev. No; I have deserved no blessings. The world holds not such another wretch. All this large fortune, this second bounty of heaven, that might have heal'd our sorrows, and satisfied our utmost hopes, in a cursed hour I sold last night.

'*Char.* Sold! How sold!'

Mrs. *Bev.* Impossible!—'It cannot be!'

Bev. That devil Stukely, with all hell to aid him, tempted me to the deed. To pay false debts of honour, and to redeem past errors, I sold the reversion—Sold it for a scanty sum, and lost it among villains.

Char. Why, farewel all then.

Bev. Liberty and life—Come kneel and curse me.

Mrs. *Bev.* Then hear me, heaven! [*kneels*] Look down with mercy on his sorrows! Give softness to his looks, and quiet to his heart! 'Take from his memory the sense of 'what is past, and cure him of despair!' On me! on me! if misery must be the lot of either, multiply misfortunes! I'll bear 'em patiently, so he is happy! These hands shall toil for his support! These eyes be lifted up for hourly blessings on him! And every duty of a fond and faithful wife be doubly done to cheer and comfort him!—So hear me! So reward me! [*Rises.*

Bev. I would kneel too, but that offended heaven would turn my prayers into curses. 'What have I to ask for? 'I, who have shook hands with hope? Is it for length of 'days that I should kneel? No; My time is limited. Or 'is it for this world's blessings upon you and yours; To 'pour out my heart in wishes for a ruin'd wife, a child and 'sister? O! no!' for I have done a deed to make life horrible t' you—

'Mrs. *Bev.* Why horrible? Is poverty so horrible;— 'The real wants of life are few. A little industry will sup'ply 'em all—And cheerfulness will follow—It is the privi'lege of honest industry, and we'll enjoy it fully.

'*Bev.* Never, never—O, I have told you but in part. 'The irrevocable deed is done.'

Mrs. *Bev.* What deed?—'And why do you look so at 'me?

'*Bev.* A deed that dooms my soul to vengeance—That 'seals your misery here, and mine hereafter.

'Mrs. *Bev.* No, no; You have a heart too good for't—'Alas! he raves, Charlotte—His looks too terrify me—'Speak comfort to him—He can have done no deed of 'wickedness.

'*Char.* And yet I fear the worst—What is it, brother?

'*Bev.* A deed of horror.'

Jar. Ask him no questions, Madam—This last misfor-fortune has hurt his brain. A little time will give him patience.

Enter STUKELY.

Bev. Why is this villain here?

Stu. To give you liberty and safety. There, madam's his discharge. [*Giving a Paper to Mrs. Beverley.*] Let him fly this moment. The arrest last night was meant in friendship; but came too late.

Char. What mean you, Sir?

Stu. The arrest was too late, I say; I would have kept his hands from blood, but was too late.

Mrs. *Bev.* His hands from blood!—Whose blood?—'O, 'Wretch! Wretch!'

Stu. From Lewson's blood.

Char. No, villain! Yet what of Lewson? Speak quickly.

Stu. You are ignorant then! I thought I heard the murderer at confession.

Char. What murderer?—And who is murder'd? Not Lewson?—Say he lives, and I'll kneel and worship you.

Stu. In pity, so I would; but that the tongues of all cry murder. I came in pity, not in malice; to save the brother, not kill the sister. Your Lewson's dead.

Char. O horrible!—'Why who has kill'd him? And yet 'it cannot be. What crime had he committed that he 'should die? Villain! he lives! he lives! and shall revenge 'these pangs.

'Mrs. *Bev.* Patience, sweet Charlotte.

'*Char.* O, 'tis too much for patience!

'Mrs. *Bev.* He comes in pity, he says. O! execrable 'villain! The friend is kill'd then, and this the murderer!'

Bev. Silence, I charge you——Proceed Sir.

Stu. No. Justice may stop the tale—and here's an evidence.

Enter BATES.

Bates. The news, I see, has reach'd you. But take comfort, madam. [*To Charlotte.*] There's one without enquiring for you—Go to him, and lose no time.

Char. O misery! misery! [*Exit.*

Mrs. *Bev.* Follow her, Jarvis. If it be true that Lewson's dead, her grief may kill her.

Bates. Jarvis must stay here, madam. I have some questions for him.

Stu. Rather let him fly. His evidence may crush his master.

Bev. Why ay; this looks like management.

Bates. He found you quarrelling with Lewson in the street last night. [*To Beverley.*

Mrs. *Bev.* No; I am sure he did not.

Jar. Or if I did——

Mrs. *Bev.* 'Tis false, old man——They had no quarrel; there was no cause for quarrel.

Bev. Let him proceed I say—O! I am sick! sick!—Reach a chair. [*He sits down.*

Mrs. *Bev.* 'You droop, and tremble, love.—Your eyes 'are fixt too.—Yet you are innocent.' If Lewson's dead, you kill'd him not.

Enter DAWSON.

Stu. Who sent for Dawson?

Bates. 'Twas I——We have a witness too, you little think of——Without there!

Stu. What witness?

Bates. A right one. Look at him.

Enter LEWSON *and* CHARLOTTE.

Stu. Lewson! O villains! villains! [*To Bates and Dawson.*

Mrs. *Bev.* [illegible]sen from the dead! Why, this is unexpected happiness!

Char. Or is't his ghost? [*To Stukely.*] That sight would please you, Sir.

Jar. What riddle's this?

Bev. Be quick and tell it——My minutes are but few.

Mrs. *Bev.* Alas! why so? You shall live long and happily.

Lew. While shame and punishment shall rack that viper [*Pointing to Stukely.*] The tale is short——I was too busy in his secrets, and therefore doom'd to die. Bates, to prevent the murder, undertook it—I kept aloof to give it credit—

Char. And give me pangs unutterable.

Lew. I felt 'em all, and would have told you—But vengeance wanted ripening. The villain's scheme was but half executed. The arrest by Dawson follow'd the supposed murder—And now, depending on his once wicked associates, he comes to fix the guilt on Beverley.

Mrs. *Bev.* O! execrable wretch!

Bates. Dawson and I are witnesses of this.

Lew. And of a thousand frauds. His fortune ruin'd by sharpers and false dice; and Stukely sole contriver and possessor of all.

'*Daw.* Had he but stopt on this side murder, we had 'been villains still.

'Mrs. *Bev.* Thus Heaven turns evil into good; and by 'permitting sin, warns men to virtue.

'*Lew.* Yet punishes the instrument. So shall our laws; 'tho' not with death. But death were mercy. Shame, 'beggary, and imprisonment, unpitied misery, the stings of 'conscience, and the curses of mankind shall make life 'hateful to him——till at last, his own hand end him'——How does my friend? [*To Beverley.*

Bev. Why, well. Who's he that asks me?

Mrs. *Bev.* 'Tis Lewson, love——Why do you look so at him?

Bev. They told me he was murder'd. [*Wildly.*]

Mrs. *Bev.* Ay; but he lives to save us.

Bev. Lend me your hand—The room turns round.

Mrs. *Bev.* O Heaven!

Lew. This villain here disturbs him. Remove him from his sight——And for your lives see that you guard him. [*Stukely is taken off by Dawson and Ba[illegible]* How is it, Sir?

Char. Tears! tears! Why fall you not?——O wretched sister!—Speak to her, Lewson—Her grief is speechless.

Lew. Remove her from this sight—' Go to her, Jarvis—' Lead and support her.' Sorrow like her's forbids complaint—Words are for lighter griefs—Some ministering angel bring her peace! ' [*Jarvis and Charlotte lead her off.* And thou poor breathless corpse, may thy departed soul have found the rest it pray'd for! Save but one error, and this last fatal deed, thy life was lovely. Let frailer minds take warning; and from example learn, that want of prudence is want of virtue.

' Follies, if uncontroul'd, of every kind,
' Grow into passions, and subdue the mind;
' With sense and reason hold superior strife,
' And conquer honour, nature, fame and life.'

Exeunt Omnes.

FINIS.

EPILOGUE.

Written by a Friend,

And Spoken by Mrs. Pritchard.

ON *ev'ry Gamester in th' Arabian nation,*
'Tis said that Mahomet denounc'd damnation:
But in return, for wicked cards and dice,
He gave them black-eyed girls in paradise.
Should he thus preach, good countrymen, to you,
His converts would, I fear, be mighty few.
So much your hearts are set on sordid gain,
The brightest eyes around you shine in vain.
Should the most heav'nly beauty bid you take her,
You'd rather hold——two Aces and a Maker,
By your example, our poor sex drawn in,
Is guilty of the same unnat'ral sin;
The study now of ev'ry girl of parts,
Is how to win your money, not your hearts.
O! in what sweet, what ravishing delights
Our beaux and belles together pass their nights!
By ardent perturbations kept awake,
Each views with longing eyes the other's—stake.
The smiles and graces are from Britain flown,
Our Cupid is an errant sharper grown,
And Fortune sits on Cytherea's throne.
In all these things, though women may be blam'd
Sure men, the wiser men, should be asham'd?
And 'tis a horrid scandal, I declare,
That four strange queens should rival all the fair;
Four jilts with neither beauty, wit, nor parts,
O shame! have got possession of their hearts:
And those bold sluts, for all their queenly pride,
Have play'd loose tricks, or else they're much belied.
Cards were at first for benefits design'd,
Sent to amuse, and not enslave the mind.
From good to bad how easy the transition!
For what was pleasure once, is now perdition.
Fair ladies then these wicked Gamesters shun.
Whoever weds one, is you see undone.